

THE POETICAL WORKS OF
GEOFFREY CHAUCER



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CONTENTS.

VOL IV

| | Page |
|--|------|
|  HE Court of Love | 1 |
| The Parlement of Briddes, or the Assembly of Foules | 51 |
| The Boke of Cup de, God of Love, or the Cuckow and the Nightingale . | 75 |
| T ^r Flower and the Leai | 87 |
| TROYLUS AND CRYSEYDE. | |
| Book I | 108 |
| Book II | 153 |
| Book III | 227 |
| Book IV | 307 |



THE COURT OF LOVE.

WITH tymeros hert and tremlyng hand
of drede,
Of cunning naked, bare of eloquence,
Unto the flour of poort in womanhede
I write, as he that none intelligence
Of metres hath, ne floures of sentence,
Sauf that me list my writing to convey,
In that I can to please her hygh nobley

The blosmes fresshe of Tullius garden soote
Present *hem* not, my matere for to borne
Poemys of Virgile taken here no rote, 10
Ne crafte of Galfride may not here sojorne
Why nam I cunning? O well may I moine,
For lak of science that I cannot write
Unto the princes of my life aright

No termys digne unto her excellence,
So is she sprong of noble stirpe and high
A world of honoure and of reverence
There is in her, this wille I testifie.
Callyope, thowe sister wise and sly,

And thowe Mynerva, guyde me with thy grace,
That langage rude my mater not deface

Thy suger dropes swete of Elicon
Distill in me, thowe gentle Muse, I pray,
And the, Melpomene, I calle anone,
Of ignoraunce the miste to chace away,
And give me grace so for to write and sey,
That she, my lady, of her worthinesse,
Accepte in gree this litill short tretesse,

That is entitled thus, The Courte of Love
And ye that bene metriciens me excuse, 30
I you bescehe for Venus sake above,
For whate I mene in this ye nede not muse
And yf so be my lady it refuse
For lak of ornat speche, I wold be woo,
That I presume to her to writen soo

But myne entent and all my besy cure
Is for to write this tretesse, as I can,
Unto my lady, stable, true, and sure,
Feithfull and kynde, sith first that she began 40
Me to accept in service as her man
To her be all the pleasure of this boke,
That, when her like, she may it rede and loke

WHEN I was yong, at eighteen yere of age,
Lusty and light, desirous of plesaunce,
Approchyng on full sadde and ripe corage,
Love aited me to do myn observaunce
To his astate, and doon hym obeysaunce,
Commaundyng me the Courte of Love to see,
A lite beside the Mounte of Citharee,

There Citherea goddesse was and quene 50
Honowred highly for her majestie,
And eke her sonne, the myghty god, I wene,
Cupyd the blynde, that for his dignyté
A thousand lovers worship on *here* kne,
There was I bidde, in payn of deth, to pere,
By Mercury, the wynged messengere

So than I wente be straunge and ferre contrees,
Enquyring ay whate costes that *to* it drewe
The Courte of Love and thiderward, as bees,
At last I se the peple gan pursue 60
Anon me thoughte som wight was there that knewe
Where that the courte was holden, ferre or nye,
And afur *hem* fulle faste I gan me hie

Anone as I *hem* overtoke, I seide,
'Haile frendes' whider purpose ye to wende?'
'Forsothe,' quod one that aunswerede lich a mayde,
'To Loves Courte nowe goo we, gentill fiend'
'Where is that place,' quod I, 'my felowe hende?'
'At Citheron, sir,' seid he, 'withoute dowte,
'The Kyng of Love, and all his noble rowte, 70

'Dwellyng withynne a castell ryally'
So than apace I jornde forth amonge,
And as he seide, so fond I there truly
For I behelde the towres high and stronge,
And highe pynacles, laige of hight and longe,
With plate of gold bespedde on every side,
And presious stones, the stone werke for to hide.

No saphir Ind, no rubé riche of price,
There lakkede thanne, nor emeraude so grene,

Bales Turkes, ne thing to my devise, 80~
That may the castell maken for to shene
All was as bright as sterres in wynter bene,
And Phebus shone, to make his pease agayn
For trespace doon to high estates tweyne,

Venus and Mars, the god and goddesse clere,
When he *hem* founde in armes cheyned faste
Venus was than full sad of harte and chere
But Phebus bemes, streight as is the maste,
Upon the castell gynith he to caste,
To please the lady, princesse of that place, 90
In sign he loketh aftu Loves grace

For there nys god in Heven or Helle, iwis,
But he hath ben right soget unto Love
Jove, Pluto, or whatesoever he is,
Ne creature in erth, or yet above,
Of thise the revers may no wight approve
But furthermore, the castell to discrive,
Yet sawe I never none so large and high

For unto Heven it streccheth, I suppose,
Withynne and oute depeynted wonderly, 100
With many a thousand daisyys, rede as rose,
And white also, this sawe I verely
But whate tho deyses myghte do signifie,
Can I not telle, sauf that the quenes floure
Alceste yit was that kepte there her sojoure,

Which under Venus lady was and quene,
And Admete kyng and soverayn of that place,
To whom obeide the ladyes gode ninetene,

With many a thowsand other, bright of face 109
And yonge men fele came forth with lusty pace,
And aged eke, *here* homage to dispose,
But whate thay were, I cowde not well disclose

Yet nere and nere furth in I gan me dresse
Into an halle of noble apparayle,
With arras spred, and cloth of gold I gesse,
And other silke of esier availe
Under the cloth of *here* estate saunz faile,
The kyng and quene ther sat, as I beheld
It passed joye of Helisé the feld

There saintes have *here* comyng and resort, 120
To seen the kyng so ryally beseen,
In purple clad, and eke the quene in sort
And on *here* hedes sawe I crownes twayn,
With stones frett, so that it was no payne,
Withouten mete and drynke, to stand and see
The kinges honour and the ryalte.

And for to trete of states with the kyng,
That bene of counsell cheef, and with the quene,
The kyng had Daunger nere to hym standyng,
The Quene of Love, Disdeyne, and that was sene
For by the feith I shall to God, I wene 131
Was never straunger *none* in her degree,
Than was the quene in castyng of her ye

And as I stode perceyvynge her apart,
And eke the bemes shynynge of her yen,
Me thoughte thay were shapynliche a darte,
Sherpe and persyng, smale and streight as line
And all her here it shone as gold so fyne,

Disshivill, crispe, downe hyngyng at her bak
A yaide in length and smoothly than I spake —

‘ O brighte Regina, who made the so faire ? 141
Who made thy colour vermelet and white ?
Where woneth that god ? howe fer above the eyre ?
Giete was his crafte, and giete was his delite
Now marvel I nothing that ye do hight
The Quene of Love, and occupie the place
Of Citharé nowe, swete lady ! thi grace ’

In mewet spake I so that nought asterte
By no condicion, worde that myghte be harde,
But in myne inwaid thought I gan adverte, 150
And oft I seide ‘ My witte is dulle and harde ’
For with her bewtie, thus, God wot, I forde
As doth the man i-ravissed with sighte,
Whenne I beheld her cristall yen so brighte,

No respect havyng whatte was best to doon,
Till right anon, beholding here and there,
I spied a frend of myne, and that full sone
A gentilwoman, was the chamberer
Unto the queen, that hote, as ye shall here,
Philobone, that loved *wel* alle her life 160
Whan she me sey, she led me furth as blyfe,

And me demaunded howe and in whate wise
I thider come, and whate myne erand was ?
‘ To sene the courte,’ quod I, ‘ and alle the guyse,
And eke to sue for pardon and for grace,
And mercy aske for all my grete trespace,
That I none erst come to the Courte of Love.
Foryeve me this, ye goddes all above.’

‘That is well seid,’ quod Philobone, ‘indede.
But were ye not assomoned to apere 170
By Mercurius, for that is all my drede’
‘Yis, gentill feire,’ quod I, ‘nowe am I here,
Ye, yit whate thowe, though that be true, my dere?’
‘Of youre fre wille ye shuld have come unsent
For ye dide not, I deme ye wille be shent

‘For ye that reigne in youth and lustynesse,
Pampired with ease, and joyless in youre age,
Your dewtie is, as ferre as I canne guesse,
To Loves Courte to dresen youre viage,
As sone as Nature maketh you so sage, 180
That ye may knowe a woman from a swan,
Or whanne youre fote is growen half a spanne

‘But sith that ye, be wilfulle negligence,
This eightene yere have kepte you eself at large,
The gretter is youre tiespace and offence,
And in youre nek you motte bere all the charge
For better were ye ben withouten barge
Amydde *the* se in tempest and in rayne,
Than byden here, receyvying woo and payne,

‘That ordeyned is for suche as *hem* absente 190
Fro Loves Courte by yeres long and fele.
I ley my lyf ye shalle full sone repente,
For Love wille reyse youre coloure, lust, and hele
Eke ye moste bayte on many an hevye mele
No force, I wis, I stired you long agoone
To drawe to courte,’ quod I tell Philobon

‘Ye shalle well se howe rowhe and angry face
The Kyng of Love will shewe, when ye hym se:

By myne advyse knele downe and aske hym grace,
 Eschewing perell and adversitee, 200
 For welle I wot it wolle none other be,
 Comforte is none, ne counsell to youre ease,
 Why wille ye thanne the Kyng of Love displese ?'

' O mercy God,' quod Iche, ' I me repent,
 Caytif and wrecche in hert, in wille and thought '
 And aftir this shall be myne hole entent
 To serve and please, howe dere that love be bought;
 Yit sith I have myne owen penaunce isought,
 With humble sprite shall I it receyve,
 Though that the Kyng of Love my life bereyve 210

' And though the fervent loves qualite
 In me did never worche truly yit I
 With all obeysaunce and humilité,
 And benigne harte, shall serve hym till I dye
 And he that Lorde of myghtes, grete and high,
 Right as hym lyst me chastice and correcte
 And punyssh me, with trespase thus enfecte '

Thise wordes seid, she caught me by the lap,
 And ledde me furth intill a temple round,
 Both large and wyde and as my blessed hap 220
 And gode aventure was, right sone I founde
 A tabernacle reised from the grounde,
 Where Venus sat, and Cupide by her side,
 Yit half for drede I gan my visage hide.

And eft agayn I loked and beheld,
 Seyng full sundry peple in the place,
 And myster folke, and som that myght not welde
Here lymmes wele, me thought a wounder case,

The temple shone with wyndowes all of glasse,
Bright as the day, with many a feire ymage, 230
And there I sey the freshe quene of Cartage,

Dydo, that brent her bewtie for the love
Of fals Eneas, and the weymyntyng
Of hir Anelida, true as turtill dove,
To Arcite fals and there was in peynting
Of many a prince, and many a doughty kyng,
Whose marterdome was shewed aboute the walles,
And howe that feale for love hadde suffred falles

But sore I was abasshed and stonyed
Of all thoo folke that there were in that tide, 240
And than I askede where thay hade woned
'In dyvers courtes,' quod she, 'here beside.'
In sondry clothing, mantil-wise full wide,
They were arrayed, and did *here* sacrifice
Unto the god and goddesse in *here* guyse

'Lo ' yonder folk,' quoth she, 'that knele in blewe,
Thay were the coloure ay and ever shalle,
In signe thay were and ever wille be true
Withouten chaunge and soothly yonder alle
That ben in blak, and mornyng cry and calle 250
Unto the goddes, for *here* loves bene
Som ferre, som dede, som all to-sherpe and kene '

'Ye than,' quod I, 'whate done thise prestes here,
Nonnes and hermytes, freres, and alle thoo
That sit in white, in russet, and in grene '
Forsoth,' quod she, 'thay waylen of *here* woo.'
'O mercy lord ' may thay so come and goo

Fiely to court and have suche libertie ?
 ‘ Ye men of eche condicion and degree,

‘ And women eke for truly there is none 260
 Excepcion made, ne never was ne may
 This courte is ope and fie for everychone,
 The Kyng of Love he wille nat say *hem* nay
 He takith all, in poore or riche arraye,
 That mekely sewe unto his excellence
 With all *here* harte and all *here* reverence’

And, walkyng thus aboute with Philobone,
 I se where come a messengere in hie
 Streight from the kyng, which let commaunde anon,
 Throughout the courte to make an ho and crye
 “ *Alle* newe come folke abide ! and wote ye whye ?
 The kynges luste is for to seen youe sone , 272
 Come nere, let se ! his wille mote nede be done’

Than gan I me presente tofore the kyng,
 Tremelyng for fere, with visage pale of hewe,
 And many a lover with me was knelyng,
 Abasshed sore, till unto the tyme thay knewe
 The sentence yove of his entent full trewe
 And at the laste the kyng hath me beholde
 With sterne visage, and seid, ‘ Whate doth this olde,

‘ Thus ferre istope in yeres, come so late 281
 Unto the courte ?’ ‘ Forsoth, my liege,’ quod I,
 ‘ An hundred tyme I have ben at the gate
 Afore this time, yet coude I never espye
 Of myne acqueyntaunce cny with myne ye,
 And shamefastnes away me gane to chace,
 But nowe I me submytte unto your grace.’

' Well ' all is perdoned, with condicion
 That thoue be trewe from hensforth to thy myght,
 And seiven Love in thyne entencion 290
 Swere this, and thanne, as fer as it is right,
 Thoue shalte have grace here in my quenes sight '
 ' Yis, by the feith I owe youre crowne, I swere,
 Though Deth therfore me thirlith with his spere '

And whan the kyng had sene us everychone,
 He let commaunde an officer in hie
 To take oure feith, and shewe us, one by one
 The statutis of the courte full besyly
 Anon the boke was leide before her ye,
 To rede and se whate thyng we most observe 300
 In Loves Courte, till that we dye and sterve.

AND for that I was lettred, there I redde
 The statutis hole of Loves Courte and halle
 The firste statute that on the boke was spred,
 Was, To be true in thought and dedes alle
 Unto the Kyng of Love the lord ryalle,
 And to the Quene, as feithfull and as kynde,
 As I coude thynke with harte, and wille, and mynde

The secunde statute, Secretely to kepe
 Councell of love, nat blowyng every where - 310
 All that I knowe, and let it synk and flete,
 It may not sowne in every wightes ere
 Exilyng slaunder ay for dred and fere,
 And to my lady, which I love and serve,
 Be true and kynde, her grace for to deserve.

The thridde statute was clerely write also,
 Withouten chaunge to lyve and dye *the same*,

None other love to take, for wele ne woo,
 For blynde delite, for earnest nor for game.
 Withoute repent for laughyng or for game, 320
 To biden still in full perseveraunce
 Al this was hole the kynges ordynaunce.

The fourth statute, To purchace ever to here,
 And stiren folke to love, and beten fire
 On Venus awter, here aboute and there,
 And preche to *hem* of love and hote desire,
 And telle howe love will quyten wel *here* hire
 This muste be kepte, and loth me to displease
 If love be wroth, passe, for *thereby* is an ease

The fifth statute, Not to be daungerous, 330
 Yf that a thought wold reyye me of my slepe
 Nor of a sight be over squymouse,
 And so veryeuly this statute was to kepe,
 To turne and walowe in my bed and wepe,
 When that my lady, of her crueltié,
 Wold from her harte exilyn all pyté.

The sixte statute, it was for me to use,
 Alone to wander, voyde of company,
 And on my ladys bewtie for to muse,
 And to thinke no force to lyve or dye, 340
 And eft agayn to thynke the remedy,
 owe to her grace I myght anon attayne,
 And telle my woo unto my souverayne

The seventh statute was, To be pacient,
 Whether my lady joyfull were or wroth;
 For wordes glad or hevvy, dilygent,

Wheder that she me helden lefe or loth ·
 And hereupon I put was to myn othe,
 Hir for to serve, and lowly to obey,
 And shewing my chere, ye, twenty sith aday 350

The eighth statute to my remembraunce,
 Was, To speke and praye my lady deie,
 With howely laboure and grete attendaunce,
 Me for to love with all her harte entiere,
 And me desire and make me joyfull chere,
 Right as she is, surmountyng every faire,
 Of bewtie well and gentill debonayre

The ninth statute, with lettres writ of gold,
 This was the sentence, How that I and alle
 Shuld ever drede to be to overbolde 360
 Her to displease, and truly so I shall,
 But ben content for thyng that may befall,
 And mekely take her chastisement and yerde,
 And to offende her ever ben aferd

The tenth statute was Egally discerne
 Bytwene thy lady and thyn abilittee,
 And thynke thyself arte never like to yerne,
 By right, her mercy nor of equité,
 But of her grace and womanly pitee,
 For though thy self be noble in thy strene, 370
 A thowsand fold more nobill is thy quene

Thy lives lady and thy souverayn,
 That hath thyne harte all hole in governaunce,
 Thow maist no wise hit taken to disdayne,
 To put the humbly at her ordynaunce,

And yafe her free the reyne of her plesaunce,
 For libertie ys thing that women loke,
 And truly ellis the mater is a croke

The cleventh statute, Thy signes for to knowe
 With ie and fynger, and with smyles softe, 380
 And lowe to kowigh, and alway for to shoue,
 For dred of spies, for to wynken ofte
 But secretly to bring up a sigh alofte,
 And eke beware of overmoche resoite,
 For that paraventure spilleth all thy sporte

The twelfth statute remember to observe
 For all the payne thow haste for love and wo,
 All is to lite her mercy to descive,
 Thow muste thynke, where ever thow ride or goo,
 And mortall woundes suffer thow also, 390
 All for her sake, and thynke it wel beset,
 Upon thy love, for it may be no bette

The thirteenth statute, Whilom is to thynke,
 Whate thyng may best thy lady lyke and please,
 And in thyne haites botom let it synke
 Som thing devise, and take for thyne ease,
 And send it her, that may hei harte pease
 Some hert, or ryng, or letre, or devise,
 Or precious stone, but spare not for no price

The fourteenth statute eke thou shalte assaye 400
 Firmely to kepe the moste parte of thy life
 Wisshe that thy lady in thyne armes laye,
 And nyghtly dreame, thow hast thy nyghtes harte wife
 Swetely in armes, straynyng her as blife

And whanne thou seest it is but fantasye,
Se that thou syng not over merly

For tō moche joye hath oft a wofull end
It longith eke this statute for to holde,
To deme thy lady evermore thy frende,
And thynke thyself in no wise a cocold 410
In every thing she doth but as she shulde
Construe the beste, beleve no tales newe,
For many a he is told, that semyth full trewe

But thinke that she, so bounteous and fayre,
Cowde not be fals imagyne this algate,
And thinke that tonges wykked wold her apparere,
Sklaunderyng her name and worshipfull estate,
And lovers true to setten at debate
And though thou seest a fawte right at thyne ye,
Excuse it blive, and glose it pretily 420

The fifteenth statute, Use to swere and stare,
And counterfete a lesyng hardely,
To save thy ladys honoure every whare,
And put thyself *for her* to fighte boldely
Sey she is gode, vertuous, and gostely,
Clere of entent, and harte, and thought and wille,
And argue not for reson ne for skille

Agayne thy ladys plesire ne entent,
For love wille not be counterpleted indede
Sey as she seith, than shalte thoue not be shent,
The crowe is white, ye truly, so I rede 431
And ay whate thyng that she the wille forbidde,
Eschewe all that, and give her soverentie,
Hir appetite folowe in all degree.

The sixteenth statute, kepe it yf thow may —
 Seven sith at nyght thy lady for to please,
 And seven at mydnyght, seven at morowe day,
 And drynke a cawdell erly for thyne ease
 Do this and kepe thync hede from all dyssease,
 And wyne the garland here of lovers alle, 440
 That ever come in courte, or ever shalle

Full fewe, thynke I, this statute hold and kepe,
 But truly this my reason giveth me fele,
 That som lovers shulde rather fall aslepe,
 Than take on hand to please so ofte and wele
 There lay none othe to this statute adele,
 But kepe who myght as gave hym his corage
 Nowe get this garlant lusty folke of age

Nowe wynne whoo may, ye lusty folke of youth,
 This garland fressh, of floures rede and white, 450
 Purpill and blewe, and colours ful uncowth,
 And I shall crowne hym kyng of all delite
 In all the courte there was not, to my sight,
 A lover trewe, that he ne was adrede,
 When he expresse hath hard the statute redde

The seventeenth statute, When age approachith on,
 And lust is leide, and all the fire is queynt,
 As fresshly than thowe shalte begynne to fonne,
 And dote in love, and all her ymage paynte
 In the remembraunce, till thow begynne to faynte,
 As in the firste season thyne hart beganne 461
 And her desire, though thowe ne may ne can

refourme thy lyvyng actuell, and lust,
 gester this in thy remembraunce :

Eke whan thow maist not kepe thy thing from rust,
 Yet speke and talk of pleasaunt dalyaunce ,
 For that shall make thyne harterejoyse and daunce,
 And when thou maist no more the gam assaye,
 The statute bidde the praye for hem that maye

The eighteenth statute, holy to commende, 470
 To please thy lady, is, That thow eschewe
 With sluttishnesse thyself for to offende,
 Be jolif, fressh, and fete, with thinges newe,
 Courtly with maner, this is all thy due,
 Gentill of porte, and loving clenlynesse ,
 This is the thing that liketh thi maistresse .

And not to wander liche a dulled asse,
 Ragged and torn, disguysed in array,
 Rybaude in speche, or oute of mesure passe,
 Thy bounde excedyng , thynk on this alway 480
 For women *been* of tender hartes aye,
 And lightly sette *here* plesure in a place ,
 When they misthinke, they lightly let it passe

The nineteenth statute, Mete and drynke forgete
 Eche other day, se that thow faste for love,
 For in the courte thei live withouten mete,
 Sauf suche as comyth from Venus all above ,
 Thei take none heed, in payne of grete reprove,
 Of mete and drynke, for that is all in vayn,
 Onely they live be sight of *here soverayne* 490

The twentieth statute, last of everychone
 Enrolle it in thyn hartes privité,
 To wryng and waile, to turne, and sigh and grone,
 When that thy lady absent is from the ,

And eke revowe the wordes *alle* that she
 Bitwene you twayn hath seid, and all the chere
 That the hath made thy lives lady dere

And se thyne harte in quiete ne in rest
 Sojorne till tyme thowe sene thy lady eft,
 But where she wonne be south, or est, or west, 500
 With all thy force, nowe se it be not left
 Be diligent, till tyme thy life be reft,
 In that thowe maist, thy lady for to see,
 This statute was of old antiquité.

An officer of high auctorité,
 Cleped Rigour, made us to swere anon
 He nas corrupt with parcialté,
 Favour, prayer, ne gold that *cherely* shone,
 'Ye shalle,' quod he, 'nowe sweren here echone,
 Yong and olde, to kepe, in that *ye* maye, 510
 The statutes truly, all aftir this day.'

O God, thought I, hard is to make this oth!
 But to my pouer shall I *hem* observe,
 In all this world nas mater half so loth
 To swere for all, for though my body sterve,
 I have no myght *hem* hole for to reserve
 But herkyn nowe the cace how it befell
 After my othe was made, the trouth to telle,

turned leves, lokyng on this boke,
 here other statutes were of women shene, 520
 And right furthwith Rigour on me gan loke
 All angrily, and seid unto the quene
 Raitour was, and charged me let bene
 here may no man,' quod he, 'the statute knoue,
 it long to women, his degree ne lowe.

‘ In secrete wise thay kepten ben full close,
They sowne ecchone to libertie, my frend,
Pleasaunt thay be, and to *here* owen purpose,
There wote no wight of *hem*, but God and fend,
Ne naught shall witte, unto the worldes ende 530
The quene hath yove me charge, in payne to dye,
Nevei to rede ne sen *hem* with myne ye

‘ For men shall not so nere of counsell ben
With womanhede, ne knowen of her guyse,
Ne whate they thinke, ne of *here* wit thengyne,
I me reporte to Salamon the wise,
And mighty Sampson, which begyled thries
With Dalida was, he wot that, in a throwe,
There may no man statute of women knowe

‘ For it peraventure may right so befalle, 540
That they be bounde by nature to disceyve,
And spyne, and wepe, and sugre strewe on galle,
The hart of man to ravisshe and to reyse,
And whet *here* tong as sharp as swerd or gleyve
It may betide, this is *here* ordynaunce,
So muste thei lowly done the observaunce,

‘ And kepe the statute yoven *hem* of kynde,
Of suche as love have yove hem in *here* life.
Men may not wete why turneth every wynde,
Nor waxen wise, nor ben inquisytyf 550
To knowe secret of mayde, widue, or wife,
For thai *here* statutes have to *hem* reserved,
And never man to knowe *hem* hath deserved

‘ Nowdiesse you furth, the God of Love you guyde ”
Quod Rigour than, ‘ and seke the temple brighte

Of Citherea goddesse, here beside ;
 Besoche her, by enfluence and myghte
 Of all her vertue, you to teche aughte,
 Howe for to serve youre ladis, and to please,
 Ye that ben sped, and set your hart in ease . 60

‘ And ye that ben unpurveied, praye *her* eke
 Comforte you sone with grace and destiné,
 That ye may sette youre harte there ye maye like,
 In suche a place, that it to love may be
 Honoure and worship, and filicité
 To you for ay Now goth by one assente.
 ‘Giaunt mercy su !’ quod we, and furth we wente

Devoutly, soft and esy pace, to se
 Venus, the goddesse, ymage all of golde
 And there we founde a thousand on *here* kne, 570
 Som fressh and feire, som dedely to beholde,
 In sondry mantils newe, and some were olde,
 Som paynted were with flames rede as fire,
 Outward to shewe *here* inwarde hote desire

With dolefull chere, ful feele in *here* complaynt,
 Criede ‘ Lady Venus, rewe upon oure sore !
 Receyve our billes, with teres al bedreynt,
 We maye not wepe, there is no more in store ,
 But woo and payne us frettith more and more
 Thow blisseful planet, lovers sterie so shene, 580
 Have rowth on us, that sighe and carefull bene ,

‘ And ponysshe, Lady, grevously, we praye,
 The false untrew, with counterfete plesaunce,
 That made *here* othe, be trewe to live or dye,

With chere assured, and with countenance,
 And falsly now thay fote loves daunce,
 Baren of rewth, untrue of that they seid,
 Now that *here* lust and plesire is alleide'

Yit eft again, a thousand milion,
 Rejoysing, love, ledyng *here* life in blis 590
 Thay seid — 'Venus, redresse of al divysion,
 Goddessse eternal, thy name ihued is'
 By loves bond is knyht all thing, *wis*,
 Best unto best, the erth to water wanne,
 Birde unto bird, and woman unto *manne*;

'This is the life of joye that we ben in,
 Resemblyng life of hevenly paradyse,
 Love is exiler ay of vice and synne,
 Love maketh hartes lusty to devise,
 Honoure and grace, have thay in every wise, 600
 That ben to loves lawe obedyent,
 Love makith folke benigne and diligent,

'Ay steryng *hem* to drede vice and shame
 In *here* degree it maketh *hem* honorable,
 And swete it is of love to bere the name,
 So that his love be feithfull, true and stable'
 Love prunyth hym, to semen amyable,
 Love hath no faute, there it is excercised,
 But sole with *hem* that have all love dispised

'Honoure to the, celestiaall and clere 610
 Goddessse of love, and to thy celestitude,
 That yevest us light so ferre downe from thi spere,
 Persing o'r hartes with thi pulcritude'

Compersion none of similitude
 May to thi grace be made in no degré,
 That hast us set with love in unité

‘ Grete cause have we to prayse thy name and the,
 For through the we live in joye and blisse
 Blessed be thowe, most souverayn to se !
 Thi holy courte of gladnesse may not mysse 620
 A thousand sith we may rejoise in this,
 That we ben thyne with harte, and all ife
 Enflamed with thi grace, and hevynly fere ’

Musyng of tho that spakyn in this wise,
 I me bethought in my remembraunce
 Myne oryson right godely to devise,
 And pleasauntly with hartes obeysaunce,
 Beseche the goddesse voiden my grevaunce ;
 For I loved eke, sauf that I wist nat where ;
 Yet downe I set and seid as ye shall heie 630

‘ Feirest of alle that ever were or be !
 Lucerne and light to pensif creature !
 Myne hole affiaunce, and my lady free,
 My goddesse brighte, my fortune and my ure,
 I yeve and yeld my harte to the full sure,
 Humbly besceching, lady, of thi grace
 Me to bestowe into som blissed place

‘ And here I vowe me feithfull, true, and kynde,
 Withoute offence of mutabilité,
 Humbly to serve, while I have witte and mynde,
 Myne hole affiaunce, and my lady free ! 641
 In thilke place, there ye me signe to be

And, sith this thing of newe is yove *me, aye*
 To love and serve, and nedely most I obey

‘ Be merciable with thi fire of grace,
 And fix myne harte there bewtie is and routh,
 For hote I love, determyne in no place,
 Sauf only this, be God and by my trouth,
 Trowbled I was with slomber, sleep, and slouth
 This other night, and in a visoun 650
 I se a woman romen up and downe,

‘ Of mene stature, and semly to beholde,
 Lusty and fressh, demure of countynauce,
 Yong and wel shape, with here *that* shone as gold,
 With eyen as cristall, farcid with plesaunce,
 And she gan stirre myne harte a lite to daunce,
 But sodenly she vanysse she gan right there
 Thus I may sey, I love and wot not where

For whate she is, ne hei dwellyng I note,
 And yit I fele that love distreyneth me 660
 Might iche her knowe, her wold I fayn, God wot,
 Serve and obeie with all benignté
 And if that other be my destiné,
 So that no wise I shall hir never se,
 Than graunte me her that best may liken me

‘ With glad rejoyse to live in parfite hele,
 Devoide of wrath, repent, or variaunce;
 And able me to do that may be wele
 Unto my lady, with hartes hie plesaunce
 And, myghty Goddesse, through thy purviaunce 670
 My witte, my thought, my lust and love so gyde,
 That to thyne honure I may me provyde

'To set myne harte in place there I may like,
 And gladly seive with all affeccoun
 Grete is the payn which at myne hart doth styke,
 Till I be sped by thyne eleccion
 Helpe, lady Goddesse ! that possession
 I myght of hei have, that in all my life
 I clepen shal my quene and hartes wife

'And in the Courte of Love to dwelle for aye 680
 My wille it is, and done the sacryfice
 Dayly with Diane eke for to fight and fraye,
 And holden werre, as myght well me suffice
 That goddesse chaste I kepen in no wise
 To serve, a figge for all her chastité !
 Hir lawe is for religiosité '

And thus gan fynyshe preyer, lawde, and pience,
 Which that I yove to Venus on my kne,
 And in myne harte to ponder and to peice,
 I gave anon hir ymage fressh bewtie 690
 Heile to that figure swete ! and heile to the,
 Cupide,' quod I, and rose and yede my way,
 And in the temple as I yede, I sey

A shryne soimownting all in stones iche,
 Of which the force was plesaunce to myne ye,
 With diamant or saphire, never liche
 I have none seyen, ywrought so wonderly
 So when I met with Philobone in hie,
 I gan demaunde, 'Who is this sepulture ?'
 'Foisoth,' quod she, 'a tender creature 700

'Ys shryned there, and Pité is her name.
 She saw an egle wreke hym on a flye,

And pluk his wynges, and ete hym, in his game,
 And tender harte of that hath made her dye
 Eke she wold wepe, and morne right piteously
 To sene a lover suffre grete destresse
 In alle the courte nas none, that as I gesse,

‘ That coude a lover halfe so well availe,
 Ne of his woo the torment or the rage
 Asslaken, for he was sure, withouten faile, 710
 That of his geyfe she coude the hete asuage
 In stede of Pité, spedeth hote corage
 The maters alle of courte, now she is dede,
 I me report in this to womanhede.

‘ For weile and wepe, and crye, and speke, and praye,—
 Women wolde not have pité on thi playnt,
 Ne by that meane to ease thyne hart conveye,
 But the receyven for *here* owen talent
 And sey that Pité causith the, in consent
 Of rewth, to take thy service and thy payne 720
 In that thou maist, to please thy soverayne

‘ But this is counsell, kepe it secretly,’
 Quod she ‘ I nolde for all the world abowte,
 The Quene of Love it wist, and witte ye why?
 For yf by me this mater spryngen oute,
 In courte no lenger shuld I, owte of dowte,
 Dwellen, but shame in all my life endry
 Nowe kepe it close,’ quod she, ‘ this hardely

‘ Well, all is well! Nowe shall ye sene,’ she seide,
 ‘ The feirest lady under sonne that is 730
 Come on with me, demeane you heche a mayde,
 With shamefast drede, for ye shall speke, I wis,

With her that is the *mirour* joye and blisse,
 But somwhate straunge and sad of her demeane
 She is, beware youre countenaunce be sene,

‘Nor over light, ne rechelesse, ne to bolde,
 Ne malapert, ne rynnyng with your tonge,
 For she will you abeisen and beholde,
 And you demande why ye were hens so longe
 Oute of this courte, withouten resorte amonge 740
 And Rosiall her name is hote aright,
 Whose harte as yet is yoven to no wight.

‘And ye also ben, as I understond,
 With love but light avaunced, by your worde,
 Might ye be happe youre fredome maken bond,
 And fall in grace with her, and wel accorde,
 Well myght ye thank the God of Love and Lord,
 For she that ye sawe in youre dreme appere,
 To love suche one, whate ar *ye* then the nere?

‘Yit wote ye whate? as my remembraunce 750
 Me yevith now, ye fayne where that ye seye,
 That ye with love hadde never acqueyntaunce,
 Sauf in your dreme right late this other daye
 Why, y^s, *pardé*! my life, that durst I laye,
 That ye were caught opon an heth, when I
 Saw you compayn, and sighe full piteously

‘Withynne an erber, and a garden faier
 With floures growe, and herbes vertuouse,
 Of which the savour swete was and the *aire*,
 There were youre self full hote and amerouse 760
 Iwis ye ben to nyse and daungerouse,

A ' wolde ye nowe repent, and love some newe ?'
 ' Nay by my trouth,' I seid, ' I never knewe

' The godely wight, whoes I shall be for aye
 Guyde me the Lord that love hath made and me '
 But furth we went into a chambre gay,
 There was Rosiall, womanly to se,
 Whose stremes, sotell-percyng of her ye,
 Myne harte ganne thrille for bewtie in the stounde
 ' Alas,' quod I, ' whoo hath me yove this wounde ?'

And than I dredde to speke till at the laste 771
 I grete the lady reverently and wele,
 Whan that my sigh was gon and overpast,
Than downe on knees ful humbly gan I knele,
 Beseching her my fervent woo to kele,
 For there I toke full purpose in my mynde,
 Unto her grace my paynfull harte to bynde

For yf I shall all fully her discryve,
 Her hede was rounde, by compace of nature,
 Her here as gold,—she passed all on live,— 780
 And lylly forehede *hade* this creature,
 With love*liche* browes, flawe, of coloure pure,
 Bytwene the whiche was mene disseveraunce
 From every browe, to shewe a *due* distaunte

Her nose directed streight, and even as lyne,
 With foume and shap therto convenient,
 In which the goddes mylke white path doth shyne,
 And eke hei yen ben bright and orient
 As is the smaragde, unto my juggement,
 Or yet thise sterres heavenly, smale and brighte,
 Hir visage is of lovely rede and white 791

Her mouth is shorte, and shutte in litell space,
 Flamyng somdele, not over rede, I mene,
 With prengnante lippes, and thiķe to kisse,
 percas,
 (For lyppes thynne, not fatte, but ever lene,
 They serve of naught, thay be not worth a bene,
 For if the basse ben full, there is delite,
 Maximyan truly thus doth he write)

But to my purpose —I sey, white as snowe
 Ben all her teth, and in order thay stande 800
 Of one stature, and eke her breth, I trowe,
 Surmounteth all oders that ever I found
 In swetnesse, and her body, face, and honde
 Ben sharply slender, so that from the hede
 Unto the fote, all is but womanhede

I hold my pease of other thinges hidde —
 Here shal my soule, and not my tong, bewraye —
 But how she was arrayed, yf ye me bidde,
 That shall I well discovere you and saye
 A bend of gold and silke, ful fressh and gay, 810
 With her in tresse, browdered full welle,
 Right smothly kempte, and shynyng every dele

Aboute her nec a floure of fressh devise
 With rubies set, that lusty were to sene,
 And she in gowne was, light and sommer-wise,
 Shapen full wele, the coloure was of grene,
 With awreat sent aboute her sides elene,
 With dyvers stones, precious and riche. —
 hus was she rared, yit saugh I never her liche.

For yf that Jove hadde but this lady seyn, 820
 Tho Calixto ne yet Alcmenia,
 Thay never hadden in his armes leyne,
 Ne he hadde loved the faire Europa,
 Ye, ne yit Dané ne Antiopa '
 For all *here* bewtie stode in Rosiall,
 She semed lich a thyng celestiaall

In bownté, favor, porte, and semlynesse
 Plesaunt of figure, myrroure of dehte,
 Graciours to sene, and rote of gentilnesse,
 With angell visage, lusty rede and white 830
 There was not lak, sauf daunger had a lite
 This godely fressh in rule and governaunce,
 And somdele straunge she was for her plesaunce

And truly sone I toke my leve and wente,
 Whanne she hadde me enquired whate I was,
 For more and more impressen gan the dente
 Of Loves darte, while I beheld her face,
 And efte agayn I com to seken grace,
 And up I put my bille, with sentence clere
 That folowith afir, rede and ye shall here 840

' O ye fressh, of bewtie the rote,
 That nature hath fourmed so wele and made
 Pryncesse and Quene ' and ye that may do bote
 Of all my langoure with youre wordes glade '
 Ye woundede me, ye made me wo bestad,
 Of grace redresse my mortall grieve, as ye
 Of al myne harme the verrey causer be

' Now am I caught, and unware sodenly,
 With persant stremes of your yen so clere,

Subjecte to ben, and serven you mekely,
And all youre man, iwis, my lady dere,
Abidyng grace, of which I you require,
That merceles ye cause me not to sterue,
But guerdon me, liche as I may deserve 850

‘For, by my trouth, the dayes of my breth
I am and wille be youre in wille and harte,
Pacient and meke, for you to suffie dethe
If it require, nowe rewe upon my smerte,
And this I swere, I never shall oute sterue
From Loves Courte, for none adversité, 860
So ye wold rewe on my distresse and me

‘My destiné, my fate, and ure, I blisse,
That have me set to ben obedient
Only to you, the floure of all iwis
I truste to Venus never to repente,
For ever redy, glad and diligent,
Ye shalle me fynde in service to your grace,
Tyll deth my life oute of my body rase

‘Humble unto your excellence so digne,
Enforeyng ay my wittes and delite 870
To serve and please with glad harte and benigne,
And ben as Troylus, Troyes knyghte,
Or Antony for Cleopatre bright,
And never you me thynkes to reneye
This shall I kepe unto myne endyng daye

‘Enprint my speche in youre memoriall
Sadly, my princesse, salve of all my soire
And think that, for I wolde becommen thrall,

And ben youre owyn, as I have seid before,
Ye most of pité cherisshe more and more 880
Youre man, and tender aftu his deserte,
And yzf him corage for to ben expert

‘ For where that one hath sette his harte on fire,
And fyndeth nether refute ne plesaunce,
Ne worde of comfote, deth will quite his hure
Allas ! that there is none allegeaunce
Of all *here* woo ! alas, the giete grevaunce
To love unloved ! But ye, my Lady dere,
In other wise may governe this matere ’

‘ Truly gramercy, frende, of your gode wille, 890
And of youre profer in youre humble wise !
But for youre service, take and kepe it stille
And where ye say, I ought you well cheryse,
And of youre giefe the remedy devise,
I knowe not why I nam acqueynted well
With you, ne wote not soothly where ye dwelle ’

‘ In arte of love I write, and songes make,
That may be song in honour of the Kyng
And Quene of Love, and than I undertake,
He that is sadde shall than full mery synge 900
And daungerus not ben in every thing
Beseche I you, but sene my wille and rede,
And let your answeie put me oute of drede ’

‘ Whate is your name ? reherse it here I pray,
Of whens and where, of whate condicion
That ye ben of ? Let se, com of and say !
Fayne wold I knowe your disposicion
Ye have putte uppon your olde entencion ,

But whate ye meane to serue me I note,
 Sauf that ye saye ye love me wounder hote ' 910

' My name ? allas, my hart, *why makest thou
 straunge ?*

Philogenet I cald am fer and nere,
 Of Cambrige clerike, that never think to chaunge
 Fro you that with youre hevenly stremes cleire
 Ravisshe myne harte and goste and al in fere
 This is the firste, I write my bille for grace,
 Me thynke I se som mercy in youre face

' And whate I mene, by goddes that all hath
 wrought,

My bille now maketh fynall mencion,
 That ye bene lady in myne inward thought 920
 Of all myne harte withouten offencion,
 That I beste love, and have sith I beganne
 To drawe to courte Lo thanne ! whate myght I saye ?
 I yeld me here unto youre nobleye.

' And if that I offend, or wilfully
 Be pompe of harte your precepte disobeye,
 Or done agayn youre wille unskyllfully,
 Or greven you for earnest or for playe,
 Correcte ye me right sharply than I praye,
 As it is sene unto youre womanhede, 930
 And rewe on me, or ellis I nam but dede '

' Nay, God forbede to feffe you so with grace,
 And for a worde of sugred eloquence,
 To have compassion in so litell space '
 Than were it tyme that som of us were hens '

Ye shall not fynde in me suche insolence
 Ay! whate is this? may we not suffer sight?
 How may ye loke upon the candill-light,

'That clere is and hotter than myn ye?
 And yet ye seid the bemes perse and frete — 940
 Howe shall ye thanne the candel-light endrye?
 For well wotte ye, that hath the sharper hete
 And there ye bidde me you correcte and bete,
 Yf ye offende,—nay, that may not be done
 There come but fewe that speden here so soon

'Withdrawe your ye, withdrawe from presens eke
 Hurte not youreself, through folly, with a loke,
 — be sory so to make you syke!
 A woman shulde be ware eke whom she toke
 Ye beth a clarke,—go serchynne *well* my boke,
 Yf any women ben so light to wynne 951
 Nay, abide a while, thogh ye were alle my kynne

'So sone ye may not wynne myne harte, in trouth
 The guyse of courte wille sene youre stedfastnesse,
 And as ye done, to have upon you routh
 Youre owen deserte, and lowly gentilnesse,
 That wille rewarde you joy for hevynesse,
 And thogh ye waxen pale, and grene and dede
 Ye most it use a while, withouten drede,

'And it accept and grucchen in no wise, 960
 But where as ye me hastily desire
 Go bene to love, me thynke ye be not wise
 Cease of your language! cease I you require!
 For he that hath this twenty yere bene here

May not obtayne, than marveile I that ye
Be nowe so bold, of love to trete with me'

'A' mercy, hart, my lady and my love,
My rightwase princesse and my lives guyde'
Nowe may I playne to Venus all above,
That rewthles ye *me* gife this wounde wide' 970
Whate have I done? why may it not betide,
That for my trouth I may receyved be?
Allas' thanne youre daunger and your crueltie'

'In wofull howre I gote was, welaway'
In wofull oure fostered and ifedde,
In wofull oure iborne, that I ne may
My supplicacion swetely have ispedde'
The frosty grave and cold must be my bedde,
Withoute ye list youre grace and mercy shewe,
Deth with his axe so faste on me doth hewe 980

'So grete disease and in so litell while,
So littel joy that felte I never yet,
And at my wo Fortune gynnyth to smyle,
That never arst I felte so harde a fitte
Confounded ben my spritis and my witte,
Tylle that my lady take me to her cure,
Which I love best of erthely creature.

'But that I like, that may I not come by,
Of that I playn, that have I habondaunce,
Sorowe and thought, thay sitte me wounder nye,
Me is withholde that myght be my plesaunce 991
Yet turne agayn, my worldly suffisaunce'
O lady bright' and sauf your feithfull true,
And ar I dye yit ones upon me rewe.'

With that I fell in *swounde* and dede as stone,
 With coloure slayn and wanne as *asshen* pale,
 And by the hande she caught me up anon,
 'Aryse anon,' quod she, 'whate? have ye dronken
 dwale?

Why slepen ye? it is no *nyghttale*
 'Now mercy swete,' quod I, *iwis* affraied 1000
 'Whate thyng,' quod she, 'hath made you so dys-
 mayed?

'Now wote I well that ye a lover be,
 Your hewe is witness in this thyng,' she seide
 'If ye were secrete, ye mighte knowe,' quod she,
 'Curteise and kynde, al this shulde be aleyde
 And now, myne harte! all that I have missaid,
 I shall amend and sette youre harte in ease'
 'That woide it is,' quod I, 'that doth me please.

'But thus I charge, that ye the *statutes* kepe,
 And breke *hem* not for slouth nor ignoraunce' 1010
 With that she gan to smyle and laughen depe,
 'Iwis,' quod I, 'I wille do youre plesaunce,
 The sixteenth statute doth me grete grevaunce
 But ye most that relese or modifie'
 'I graunte,' quod she, 'and so I wille truly'

And softly thanne her coloure gan appeire,
 As rose so rede, throughoute her visage *alle*,
 Wherefore me thynke it is accordyng here,
 That she of right be cleped Rosyall
 Thus have I wonne, with wordes grete and *smalle*,
 Some godely worde of hir that I love beste, 1021
 And trust she shall yit sette myne harte in rest

‘GOTH on,’ she seid to Philobone, ‘and take
 This man with you, and lede hym all abowte
 Withynne the courte, and shewe hym, for my sake,
 Whate lovers dwelle withynne, and alle the rowte
 Of officers him shewe, for he is, oute of dowte,
 A straunger yit ’—‘Come on,’ quod Philobone,
 ‘Philogenet, with me now must ye gon’

And stalkyng softe with easy pase, I sawe, 1030
 Aboute the kyng stonden enviroyn,
 Attendaunce, Diligence, and their felawe
 Forthier, *Esperaunce*, and many one,
 Dred-to-offende there stode, and not alone,
 For there was eek the cruel *adversarie*,
 The lovers foe, that cleped is *Despaire*,

Which unto me spak angicly and felle,
 And seid, my lady me dysseyve ne shalle
 ‘Trowest thowe,’ quod she, ‘that all that she did
 telle,

Ys true? Nay, nay, but under hony galle 1040
 Thy birth and hirs they be nothing egalle
 Caste of thyne harte, for alle her wordes white,
 For in gode faith she lovith the but a lite

And eke remember thyne habilité
 May not compare with hir, this well thowe wote’
 ‘e, than came Hope and seid, ‘My frende let be’
 ‘beleve hym not Despaire he gynneth dote’
 Alas!’ quod I, ‘here is both cold and hote
 ne tone me biddeth love, the toder naye,
 Thus wote I not whate me is best to saye 1050

But well wote I, my lady grauntede me,
 ruly to be my woundes remedye,

Hei gentilnesse may not infected be
 With doblenes, thus trust I till I dye '
 So cast I voide Despaires companye,
 And taken Hope to counceel and to frende
 'Ye, kepe that wele,' quod Philobone, 'in mynde '

And there beside, withyn a bay wyndowe,
 Stode one in grene, ful large of brede and length,
 His berd as blak as fethers of the crowe, 1000
 His name was Lust, of wounder might and
 strength,

And with Delite to argue there he thynketh,
 For this was alle his opynyon,
 That love was synne and so he hath begonne

To reasone faste, and legge auctorité
 'Nay,' quod Delite, 'love is a vertue clere,
 And from the soule his progresse holdeth he
 Blynd appytyte of lust doth often stirre,
 And that is synne for reason lakketh there,
 For thowe dost thinke thi neighbourswife to wyinne.
 Yit thynk it well that love may not be synne, 1071

'For God, and saint, thay love right verely,
 Voide of al synne and vise this knowe I wele,
 Affecion of flessch is synne truly,
 But verray love is vertue, as I fele,
 For verray love may thy freyle desire akkele
 For *veray* love is love withouten synne
 'Nowe stynte,' quod Lust, 'thow spekest not worth
 a pynne'

And there I left *hem* in *heie* arguynge,
 Romyng ferther in the castell wide,

And in a corner Lier stode talkyng
 Of lesinges faste, with Flattery there beside;
 He seid that women were attire of pride,
 And men were founde of nature variaunte,
 And coude be false and shewen beawe semblaunt.

Then Flattery bespake and seid, 1101
 'Se, so she goth on patens faire and fete,
 Hit doth right wele whate prety man is this
 That rometh her? nowe truly drynke ne mete
 Nede I not have, mine herte for joye doth bete
 Hym to beholde, so is he godely fressh 1091
 It semeth for love his harte is tender nessh'

This is the courte of lusty folke and gladde,
 And wel becometh *here* abite and arraye
 O why be som so sory and so sadde,
 Complaynyng thus in blak and white and graye?
 Freres thay ben, and monkes, in gode fayre
 Alas, for rewth! grete dole it is to sene,
 To se *hem* thus bewaile and sory bene

be howe thei cye and wryng *here* handes white,
 For thei so sone wente to religion! 1101
 And eke the nonnes with vaile and wymple plight,
There thought is, thei ben in confusion
 Alas,' thay sayn, 'we fayne perfeccion,
 In clothes wide, and lake oure libertie,
 But all the synne mote on oure frendes be

For, Venus wote, we wold as fayne as ye,
 hat ben attired *here* and wel besene,
 esnen man and love in oure degree,
 erme and feithfull right as wolde the quene. 1110

Oure frendes wikke, in tender youth and grene,
 Ayenst oure wille made *us* religious,
 That is the cause we morne and waylen thus'

Than seide the monkes and freres in the tide,
 'Well may we course oure abbeyes and our place,
 Our statutes sharpe to syng in copes wide,
 Chastly to kepe us oute of loves grace,
 And nevere to fele comferte ne solace,
 Yet suffere we the hete of loves fire,
 And afir that *som* other happily we desire

1120

'O Fortune cursed, why nowe and wherefore
 Hast thoue,' thay seide, 'bereft us libartie,
 Sith nature yave us instrument in store,
 And appetite to love and lovers be?
 Why mote we suffere suche adversité,
 Dyane to serve, and Venus to refuse?
 Full often sithe these matiers doth us muse

'We serve and honoure, sore ayenst oure wille,
 Of chastité the goddes and the quene,
 Us lefer were with Venus biden stille,
 And have reward for love, and soget bene
 Unto these women courtely, flessch, and shene
 Fortune, we curse thi whele of variaunce!
 There we were wele thou revist our p_{er}vaunce'

1130

Thus leve I *hem*, with voice of pleint and care,
 In ragyng woo crying full petiously,
 And as I yede, full naked and full bare
 Some I beholde, loking dispiteously
 On poverité, that dedely caste *here* ye,

And 'Welaway' thei cried, and were not fayne,
For they ne myght *here* glad desire attayne 1141

For lak of richesse worldely and of goode,
Thay banne and curse, and wepe, and seyn, 'Allas,
That poverte hath us hent that whilom stode
At hartis eas, and fre and in gode case!
But now we dare not shew our-self in place,
Ne us embolde to dwelle in company,
There asoure haite wolde love right faithfully'

And yet agaynewarde shryked every nonne,
The *pange* of love so strayneth *hem* to crye 1150
'Nowe woo the tyme,' quod thay, 'that we be
boune'

This hatefull ordre nyse will done us dye!
We sigh and sobbe, and bleden inwardly,
Fretyng oure self with thought and hard complaynt,
Than ney for love we waxen wode and faynt'

And as I stode beholdyng here and there,
was ware of a sorte full languysshynge,
avago and wilde of lokyng and of chere,
Iere mantaylles and *here* clothes aye teryng,
nd ofte thay were of nature complaynyng, 1160
or they *here* membres lakked, fote and hande,
with visage wy, and blynde, I understande

ay lakkede shap, and beaute to preferre
em self in love and seid that God and Kynde
with forged *hem* to worshypen the steire,
nus the bright, and leften all behynde
s other werkes clene and oute of mynde:

'For other have *here* full shape and bewtie,
And we,' quod thay, 'ben in deformyté'

And nye to *hem* there was a companye, 1170
That have the susteis waried and mysseid,
I mene the thre of fatall destyne,
That be our wordes and sone in a brayde,
Oute gan thay crye as thay hadde been afrayed,
'We curse,' quod thay, 'that ever hath nature,
Iformed us this wofull life to endure'

And there was Contrite, and gan him repente,
Confessyng hole the wounde that Cithéré
Hath with the darte of hote desire hym sent,
And howe that he to love muste subyet be 1180
Thanne held he all his skornes vanyté,
And seide that lovers lede a blisfull life,
Yonge men and old, and widue, maide and wife

'Bereve me, Goddesse,' quod he, 'of thy myght,
My skornes all and skoffes, that I have
No power for to mokken any wight,
That in thy service dwelle for I dede rave
This knowe I welle right nowe, so God me save,
And I shal be the chefe post of thy feith,
And love upholde, the rovers who-so seith' 1190

Dissemble stode not ferre from hym in trouthe,
With party mantill, party hode and hose;
And seid he had upon his lady rowth,
And thus he wounde hym in, and gan to glose
Of his entent ful doble, I suppose
In all the world he seid he lovid *her* wele,
But ay me thoughte he loved hir nere a dele.

Eke Shamefastnesse was there, as I toke hede.
 That blusshed rede, and darst nat ben aknowe
 She lover was, for thereof hadde she diede, 1200
 She stode and hyng her visage downe alowe,
 But suche a sight it was to sene, I trowe,
 As for thuse roses rody on *here* stalke
 There cowde no wight her spy to speke or talke

In loves arte, so gan she to abasshe,
 Ne durste not utter al her privité
 Many a stripe and many a grievouse lasshe
 She gaven to *hem* that wolden lovers be,
 And hindered sore the sympill comonaltie,
 That in no wise durste grace and mercy crave,
 For were not she, thei node but aske and have, 1211

Where yf thay nowe approchyn for to speke,
 Thanne Shamefastnesse returnyth *hem* agayn
 Thay thynke, if *we* oure secrete counsell breke,
 Our ladys wille have scorne on us certen,
 And *paraventure* thynken grete disdayne
 Thus Shamefastnesse may bryngyn in dispeire,
 When she is dede the toder will be heire

Come forth Avaunter! nowe I ryng thy belle!
 I spied hym sone, to God I make avowe, 1220
 He lokede blak as fendes doth in Helle —
 ‘The first,’ quod he, ‘that ever *I* dide wowe,
 Withynne a worde she com, I wotte not howe
 So that in armes was my lady fre,
 And so hath ben a thousand mo than she

‘In Englund Bretayn, Spain, and Pycardie,
 Artoys, and Fraunce, and up in hie Holande,

In Burgoyne, Naples, and Italy,
 Naverne, and Grece, and up in hethen londe,
 Was never woman yit that wolde withstonde, 1230
 To ben at myne commaundement whan I wolde.
 I lakkede neither silver coyne ne golde

‘ And there I met with this estate and that,
 And here I broched, her, and here, I trowe
 Lo ! there goith one of myne, and wotte ye whate ?
 Yonne fressh attired have I leyde ful lowe,
 And suche one yonder eke right well I knowe
 I kepte the statute whan we lay ifere,
 And yet yon same hath made me right goode chere ’

Thus hath Avaunter blowen every where 1240
 Al that he knowith, and more a thousand folde,
 His ancestrye of kynne was to Liere,
 For firste he makith promyse for to holde
 His ladys counsell, and it not unfold,
 Wherefore, the secrete when he doth unshutte,
 That lieth he, that all the world may witte

For falsing so his promyse and beheste,
 I wounder sore he hath suche fantasie,
 He lakketh witte, I trowe, or is a beste,
 That canne no bette hymself with reason gu
 Be myne advice, Love shall be contrarie 1251
 To his awayle, And hym eke dishonoure,
 So that in court he shall no more sojoure.

‘ Tak hede,’ quod he, this litell Philobone,
 ‘ Where Envy e rokketh in the corner yonde,
 And sitteth dirke, and ye shalle see anon
 His lene bodie, fading face and honde,

Hymself he fretteth, as I understonde,
 Witnes of Ovide methamorphososee,
 The lovers foo he is, I will not gloose. 1250

‘ For where a lover thinketh him promote,
 Envy will grucche, repynnyng at his wele ,
 It swelleth sore aboute his hartes rote,
 That in no wise he canne-not live in hele ,
 And yf the feithfull to his lady stele,
 Envy will nose and 1yng it rounde aboute,
 And seye much worse than done is, oute of dowte ’

And Pieve Thought, rejoycing of hym-self,
 Stode not ferre thens in abite meivulous ,
 ‘ Yonne is,’ thought I, ‘ som sprite or som elf, 1270
 His sotill image is so curious
 Howe is,’ quod I, ‘ that he is shaded thus
 With yonder cloth, I note of whate coloure ?’
 And nere I went and gan to lere and pore,

And frayned him a question full harde
 ‘ What is,’ quod I, ‘ the thyng thou lovest beste ?
 Or whate is bote unto thy paynes harde ?
 Me th^{is} ask thou liveste here in giete unreste,
 Thow wandrest ay from south to est and weste,
 And est to north, as ferre as I canne see, 1280
 There is no place in courte may holden the.

‘ Whom folowest thowe ? where is thy harte iset ?
 But my demaunde asoile I thee require ’
 ‘ Me thoughte,’ quod he, ‘ no creature may lette
 Me to ben here, and where as I desire
 For where as absence hath done oute the fire,

My mery thought it kyndelith yet agayn,
That bodely me thinke with my souverayne

' I stand and speke, and laugh, and kisse, and halse,
So that my thought comforteth me ful ofte 1290
I think, God wot, though all the world be false, *
I wille be trewe, I think also howe softe
My lady is in speche, and this on lofte
Byngeth myne harte *in* joye and *grete* gladnesse,
This prevey thought alayeth myne hevynesse

' And whate I thinke or where to be, no man
In all this erth can tell, Iwis, but I
And eke there nys no swalowe swifte, ne swan
So wight of wyng, ne half *so* yerne can flye,
For I canne ben, and that right sodenly, 1300
In Heven, in Helle, in Paradise, and here,
And with my lady, whan I wylle desire

' I am of counsell ferre and wide, I wote,
With lord and lady, and *here* privité
I wotte it all, and be it cold or hote,
Thay shalle not speke withouten licence of me
I mene, in suche as sesonable bee,
For first the thing is thought withynne the harte
Er any worde oute from the mouth *astarte*'

And with that worde Thought bad farewell and
yeede 1310

Eke furth went I to sene the cortis guyse,
And at the dore came in, so God me spede,
Twenty courteours of age and of assise
Liche high, and broad, and, as I me advise,

The Golden Love, and Leden Love thay hight.
The tone was sad, the toder glad and light.

Yis ' drawe youre harte, with all your force and
myght,
To lustynesse and bene as ye have seid,
And thinke that I no drope of favour hight,
Ne never hade unto youre desire obeide, 1320
Tille sodenly me thoughte me was affrayed,
To sene you waxe so dede of countenance,
And Pité bade me done you som pleasaunce

' Oute of her shryne she rose from dethe to live,
And in myne *ere* full prively she spake,
' Doth not youre servaunte hens away to drive,
Rosiall,' quod she, ' and than myn harte brak,
For tenderreiche and where I founde moche lake
In youre persoune, *than* I me *self* bethoughte,
And seide, this is the man myne harte hath sought '

' Gramercy, Pité ' might I *but* suffice 1331
To yeve *due* lawde unto thy shryne of gold,
God wotte I wolde for sith that thou dide rise
From deth to live for me, I am beholde
To *thanken* you a thousand tymes told,
And eke my lady Rosyall the shene,
Which hath in comforte set myne harte, I wene

' And here I make myne protestacion,
And depely swere, as myne power, to bene
Feithful, devoide of variacion, 1340
And here forbere in anger or in tene,
And serviceable to my worldes quene,

With all my reason and intelligence,
To done her honoure high and reverence'

I hadde not spoke so sone the word, but she,
My souverayne, dyde thanke me hartily,
And seid, 'Abide, ye shal dwelle stille with me'
Tylle season come of May, for than truly,
The Kyng of Love and all his company
Shalle hold his feste full ryally and welle,' 1350
And there I bode till that the sesone felle

On May day, when the larke began to ryse,
To matens wente the lusty nightingale
Withyn a temple shapen hawthorne-wise,
He myghte not slepe in al the nyghtertale,
But '*Domine labia*, gan he crye and gale,-
'My lippes open, Lord of Love, I crye,
And let my mouth thi preysing now bewyge'

The egle sang '*Venite* bodies alle,
And let us joye to love that is oure helth' 1360
And to the deske anon thay gan to falle,
And who came late he preceed in by stelth
Than seide the fawcon, oure owen hartis welth,
'*Domine Dominus noster* I wot,
Ye be the God that done us brenne thus hote'

'*Caeli enarrant*,' seide the poppyngay,
'Youre myght is told in Heaven and firmament'
And than came inne the goldfynch fresh and gay,
And seid this psalm with hartily glad intent,
'*Domina est terra*,' this laten intent, 1370

The God of Love hath erth in governaunce
And then the wren gan skippen and to daunce

‘*Jube Domne* O Lorde of Love, I praye
Commande me wel this lesson for to rede,
This legend is alle that wolden deye
Marters for love, God yif *here* sowles spede !
And to the Venus *singe* we, oute of drede,
By influence of all thy vertue greate,
Besechyng the to kepe us in oure hete ’

The seconde lesson robyn redebreste sang, 1380
‘Haile to the God and Goddesse of oure lay !’
And to the lectorn amorysly he sprong —
‘Haile eke,’ quod *he*, ‘O fresshe season of May,
Oure myneth glad that syngen on the spray !
Haile to the floures, red, and white, and blewe,
Which by *here* vertue maketh oure lustes newe !’

The thridde lesson the turtill-dove toke up,
And therat lough the mavis in a scorn
He seid, ‘O God, as mut I dyene or surpe,
This folissh dove wille gife us al an horne !’ 1390
Ther e ben right here a thousand better borne,
To rede this lesson, which as welle as he,
And eke as hote, can love in all degree

The turtylle dove seide, ‘Welcom, welcom May,
Gladsom and light to lovers that ben trewe !
I thanke the Lord of Love that doth purveye
For me to rede this lesson al of dewe,
For in gode south of corage I pursue

To serve my make till deth us moste departe '
 And than '*Tu autem*' sang he all apaite 1400

'*Te deum amoris*' sang the thurstell-cok
 Tuball hymself, the firste musician,
 With key of armony coude not unloke
 So swete tewne as that the thrustill can
 'The Lord of Love we praysen,' quod he than,
 And so done alle the foules giete and lite,
 'Honoure we May, in false loveis dispite'

'*Dominus regnavit*,' seide the pecok there,
 'The Lord of Love that myghty prynce, ¹⁴¹⁰
 He hath receyved here and every where
 Nowe *Jubilate* syng'—'Whate meneth this?'
 Seid than the lynnette, 'welcom, Lord of blisse!'
 Oute sterte the owl with '*Benedicite*,'
 'Whate meneth all this mery fare?' quod he

'*Laudate*,' sang the laike with voice ful shrille,
 And eke the kite '*O admirabile*,
 This quere wil throwe myne eris pers and thuille,
 But whate? welcom this May season,' quod he,
 'And honoure to the Lord of Love mot be,
 That hath this feeste so solempne and so high '
 '*Amen*,' seid alle, and so seid eke the pye 1421

And furth the cokkowe gan procede anon,
 With '*Benedictus*' thankyng God in hast,
 That in this May wold visite *hem* echon, ^r
 And gladden *hem* all while the feste shall leste
 And therewithal a lougher oute he braste,
 'I thanke it God that I shuld ende the song,
 And all the service which hath ben so long'

Thus sange thay all the sevice of the feste,
 And that was done ight crly, to my dome, 1400
 And furth goith all the courte bothe moste and leste,
 To feche the flouresfressh, and brauncheand blome,
 And namly hawthorn brought both pageand grome,
 With fresshe garlantis partie blewe and white,
 And *hem* rejoyssen in *here* grete delite

Eke oche at other thiwe the floures brighte,
 The prymerose, the violet, and the golde,
 So than, as I beheld the riall sighte,
 My lady gan me sodenly beholde,
 And with a trewe love, plited many-folde, 1440
 She smote me thugh the *very* haite as blive,
 And Venus yet I thanke I am alive

EXPLICIT.

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THE PARLEMENT OF BRIDDES, OR THE
ASSEMBLY OF FOULES

HHE lyf so short, the crafte so longe to
leine,
Thassay so harde, so sharpe the con-
querynge,

The slyder joy, that alwey slyd so yeine,
Al this meene I be love, that my felynge
Astonyeth soo with a diedeful worchyng
So soore ywys, that whan I on hym thynke,
Nat wote I wel wher that I wake or wynke.

For al be that I knowe not Love in dede,
Ne wote how *that* he guyteth folke her hire,
Yet hapeth me in bookes ofte to rede 10
Of hys miracles, and of hys cruelle yre,
There rede I wel, he wol be lorde and sire
Dar I not seyn hys strokes ben so sore,
But God save suche a lorde ! I kan no more

Of usage *olde*, what for luste, what for lore,
On bookes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde
But why that I speke al this ? Not yore
Agon, hit happed me for to beholde
Upon a booke was write wyth lettres olde,

And therupon, a certeyne thing to lerne, 20
The longe day ful fast I rad and yerne

Fo1 out of olde feldys, as men seyth,
Cometh al this newe corne fro yere to yere,
And oute of olde bokes, in good feythe,
Cometh al thys newe science that men lere.
But now to purpose, of my firste matere —
To rede forth hit gan me so delyte,
That al the day me thought *hit* but a lyte

This booke, of which I *now* make mension,
Entitled was al there, I shal yow telle — 30
'Tullius, of the dreme of the Scipion'
Chapitres hyt had seven, of Hevene and Helle,
And erthe, and of soules that therynne duelle,
Of which, as shortly, as I kan *it* tiete
Of his sentence I wol yow telle the grete

First telleth hyt, whan Scipion was come
Into Aufyke, how he mette Massynysse,
That hym for joy in armes hath ynome
Than telleth he hir speche and al the blysse,
That was betwixt hem til the day gan mysse, 40
And how his auncestre, Aufrikan so deie,
Gan on his slepe that nyght to hym appere

Than tolde he hym, that, fro a sterry place,
How Aufrikan hath hym Cartage yshewed,
And warned hym before of al hys grace,
And seyde hym, what man, lered or lewede,
That loveth comune profyt, wel ythewede,
He shal unto a blysful place wende,
There the joy is that lasteth without ende

Than asked he, yf the folke that here be dede 50
 Have lyfe, and dwellynge in another place ?
 And Aufrikan seyde, Ye, withoute drede
 And *that* oure present woildes lyves space,
 Meneth but a maner dethe, what wey we trace ,
 And ryghtfull folke shul goo whan that they die
 To Hevene , and shewed hym the Galoxye

Than shewede he hym the lytele erthe that here is,
 At regarde of Hevenes quantyté,
 And aftir shewed hym the nyne speris ,
 And aftir that the melodye herd he, 60
 That cometh of thilke speres thries thre,
 That welleys of musyke *ben* and melodye
 In this worlde here, and cause of amonye

Than bad he hym, seethe Erthe *was here* so lite,
 And fulle *of turment, and* of harde giace,
 That he ne shuld hym in the world delyte
 Than tolde he hym, in certeyne yeies space,
 That every sterre shulde come into his place,
 There hit was first, and al shal out of mynde,
 That in this worlde was doon of al mankynde 70

Than prayed he Scipion telle hym alle
 The wey to come *unto that* Hevene blysse
 And he seyde ‘ Knowe thy selfe firste *immortalle*,
 And loke ay besely thou werke and wysse
 To comune profyte, and thou shalt never mysse
 To come swiftly unto that place dere,
 That ful of blysse ys, and *of* soules clere

‘ But brekers of the lawe, soth for to seyne,
 And lecherous folke, after that they be dede,

Shul alwey whirle aboute therthe in peyne, 80
 Til many a woulde be passed, out of drede,
 And than foryeven hem al hir wikked dede,
 Than shul they come unto that blysful place,
 To which to come God sende ech lover grace'

The day gan failen, and the derke nyght,
 That reveth bestes from her besynesse,
 Berefte me my boke for lake of lyght,
 And to my bed I gan me for to dresse,
 Fulfilled of thought and besy hevynesse,
 For bothe I hadde thinge which that I nolde, 90
 And eke I ne hadde thyng that I wolde

But fynally my spiryte at the laste
 For-wery of my labour al the day,
 Tooke rest, that made me to slepe faste,
 And in my slepe I mette, as *that* I lay,
 How Aufikan, ryght in that selfe aray
 That Scipion hym sawe before that tyde,
 Was comen, and stooode ryght at my beddys side

The wey hunter slepyng in hys bed,
 To woode ayeine hys mynde gooth anoon, 100
 The juge dremeth how hys plees ben sped,
 The cartar dremeth how his cartes goone,
 The ryche of golde, the knyght fyght with his fone,
 The seke meteth he drynketh of the tonne,
 The lover meteth he hath hys lady wonne

Can not I seyne yf that the cause were,
 For I redde had of Aufikan beforne,
 That *made* me to mete that he stood there,

But thus seyde he 'Thou hast the so wel borne
 In lokynge of myn olde booke al to-torne, 110
 Of which Macrobye roght noght a lyte,
 That somedel of thy labour wolde I the quyte'

Cytnerea, thou blysfyl lady swete'
 That with thy firy bronde dauntest whom the lest,
 And madest me thys swevene for to mete,
 Be thou my helpe in this, for thou maist best'
 As wisly as I sawe the northe northe west,
 When I beganne my swevene for to write,
 So yeve me myght to ryme and to endyte

This forseyde Aufrikan me hent anoone, 120
 And forthwith hym unto a gate me broghte
 Ryght of a parke, walled with grene stoon,
 And over the gate, with leties large ywrought,
 There were verses wryten, as me thoghte,
 On eyther halfe, of ful grete difference,
 Of whiche I shal yow seye the pleyn sentence —

'Thorgh me men goon into that blysfyl place,
 Of hertes hele and dedely woundes cure,
 Thorgh me men goon unto the welle of grace,
 There grene and lusty May shal ever endure, 130
 This is the way to al good aventure,
 Be glad, thou reder, and thy sorwe of caste,
 Al open am I, passe in and hye the faste'

'Thorgh memen goon,' thanne spake that other side,
 'Unto the mortale strokes of the spere,
 Of which disdayne and daunger is the gyde,
 There tree shal never frute ne leves bere;
 This streame yow ledeth unto the sorwful were,

There as the fyssh in prisoun is al drye ,
 Theschewing ys only the remedye ' 140

These verses of golde and blake ywryten were,
 Of which I gan astounede to beholde ,
 For with that oon encreased ay my fere,
 And with that other gan myn hert to bolde ,
 That oon me hette, that other dide me colde ,
 No wytte had I, for enour, for to chese,
 To entre or flee, or me to save or lese

Ryght as betwix adamauntes twoo
 Of evene wyght, a pece of iren ysette
 Ne hath no myght to meve to noi fro , 150
 For what that one may hale that other lette
 So ferde I, that I ne wiste wher that me was bette
 To entre or leve, til Aufrikan, my gyde,
 Me hente and shoofe in at the gates wyde

And seyde, ' Hyt stondeth writen in thy face,
 Thyn error, though thou telle hyt not me ,
 But drede the not to come into this place ,
 For this writynge ys nothing ment be the,
 Ne be noon but he Loves servant be ,
 For thou of love hast lost thy taste, y gesse, 160
 As seke man hath of swete and bitternesse

' But natheles, although that thou be dulle,
 That thou canst not do, yet thou maist hyt se ,
 For many a man that may not stonde a pulle,
 Yet lyketh hym at the wrastelynge to be,
 And demeth yit, whethu he do bet, or he ;
 And, yf thou haddest kunnyng for to endite,
 I shal the shewen mater of to wryte '

And with that my honde in hys he toke anoon,
 Of which I comfort kaught, and went in faste 170
 But Lorde ! so I was glad and wel begoon !
 For over al, where I myn eyen caste,
 Weren trees claad with levys that ay shal laste,
 Eche in his kynde, with coloure fressh and grene
 As emerawde, that joy was for to sene

The bylder oke, and eke the hardy asshe,
 The peler-elme, the cofre unto careyne,
 The box pipe tree, holme to whippes lasshe,
 The saylynge firie, the cipresse deth to pleyne,
 The sheter ewe, the aspe for shaftes pleyne, 180
 The olyve of pes, and eke the drunken vyne,
 The victor palme, the laurere, to, devyne

A gardyn sawh I ful of blossomed bowis,
 Upon a ryver, in a grene mede,
 There as swetnes evermor ynowh is,
 With floures white, blew, yelow, and rede,
 And colde welle stremes, nothings dede,
 And swymmynge ful of smale fisshes lyghte,
 With fynnes rede, and scales sylver bryghte

On every bowgh the briddes herde I synge, 190
 With voys of aungel in her armony,
 That besyed hem her briddes foithe to brynge,
 The lytel conyes to her pley gunnen hye,
 And further abouten I gan espye,
 The diadful roo, the buk, the hert, and hynde,
 Squerels, and bestis smale, of gentil kynde.

On instrumentes of strynges in acorde
 Herde I so pley a ravysshinge swetnesse,

That God, that maker ys of al and Lorde,
 Ne herde never bettir, as I gesse 200
 Therewith a wynde, unnethe hyt myghte lesse,
 Made in the leves grene a noyse softe,
 Accordant to the foulys songe on lofte

The aire of that place so attempre was,
 That never was grevance therof hoot ne colde
 Ther growen eke every holsome spice and gras,
Ne no man may there wexe seke ne olde
 Yet was there more joy a thousande folde
Than man kan telle, never wolde hyt nyght,
 But ay clere day, to any mannys syght 210

Under a tree, besyde a welle, I say
 Cupide our lorde hys arwes forge and fyle,
 And at hys fete hys bowe alrede lay,
 And welle hys doghtre tempred, al the while,
 The heddes in the welle, and with harde file
 She couched hem after, as they shulde serve
 Somme to slee, and somme to wounde and kerve

Thoo was I war of Pleasaunce anon ryght,
 And of Array, and Lust, and Curtesye,
 And of the Crafte, that kan and hath the myght 220
 To doo be force a wyght to do folye
 Dysfigured was she, I shal not lye
 And by hym selfe, under an oke I gesse,
 Sawgh I Delyte, that stode with Gentilesse.

Than sawgh I Beauté, with a nice atire,
 And Yowthe, ful of game and jolyté,
 Fool-hardynesse, Flattery, and Desire,
 Messagery, Mede, and other thre,

Her names shul noght *here* be tolde for me
 And upon pelers grete, of jasper longe, 230
 I sawgh a temple of glas founded stronge

About the temple ther daunced alway
 Wommen ynow, of whiche somme *there* were
 Faire of himself, and somme of hem *were* gay,
 In kuteles al disshevele wente they there,
 That was hir office alwey, fro yere to yere
 And on the temple saugh I, white and faire,
 Of dowves white many a hundred pane.

Before the temple dore, ful soberly,
 Dame Pes sate, a curtyne in hir hande, 240
 And hir beside, wonder discretly,
 Dame Pacience sittynge thei I fonde,
 With face pale, upon an hille of sonde,
 And alder next, within and *ele* withoute,
 Behest and Arte, and of her folke a rowte

Withynne the temple of syghes, hoothe as fire,
 I herde a swogh, that gan aboute ienne;
 Whiche syghes were engendred with desire,
 That maden every auter for to bienne
 Of newe flawme, and *wel* aspyed I thenne, 250
 That al the cause of sorwes that they drye
 Come of the bitter goddysse Jalousye.

The god Priapus sawgh I as I wente
 Withynne the temple, in soverayne place, stonde
 In suche array, as whanne the asse hym shente
 With crie by nyght, and with his ceptre in honde.
 Ful besely men gunne assay and fonde,
 Upon his hede to sette, of sondry hewe,
 Garlondes fulle of fresshe floures newe.

And in a prevy corner, in disporte 260
Fond I Venus and hir porter Rychesse,
That was ful noble and hawteyn of hir porte ,
Derke was that place, but, afterward, lyghtnesse
I saugh a lyte, unnethe hyt myghte be lesse ,
And on a bed of golde she lay to reste,
Til that the hoothe Sonne gan to weste

Hir gilte heeres with a golde threde
Ybounden were, untressed as she lay ,
And naked fro the brest unto the hede
Men myght hir see , and, sothely for to saye, 270
The remenant kovered wel, to my paye,
Ryght with a subtil keveichefe of Valence ,
There was no thikker clothe of defence

The place yafe a thousande savours swoote,
And Bacus, god of wyne, sate hir beside ,
And Ceres next, that dooth of hunger boote ,
And, as I seide, amyddes lay Cupide,
To whom on knees the yonge folkes criede
To ben hir helpe , but thus I lete hir lye,
And ferther in the temple I gan espye, 280

That, in dyspite of Diané the chaste,
Ful many a bowe ybroke henge on the walle,
Of maydens, suche as gonne hyr times waste
In hir servise and peynted over alle,
Of many a storye, of which I touche shalle
A fewe, as of Calixte, and Athalante,
And many a mayde, of which the name I wante.

Semyramus, Candace, and Ercules,
Biblys, Dido, Tesbe, and Piramus,

Tristram, Isoude, Paris, and Achilles, 290
 Eleyne, Cleopatre, and Troylus,
 Silla, and eke the moder of Romulus —
 Alle these were peynted on that other syde,
 And al hei love, and in what plite they dide

Whan I was comen ayen into that place
 That I of spake, that was so swoote and grene,
 Foith welke I thoo my selven to solace
 Tho was I war, where ther sate a quene,
 That, as of lyght the somer sonne shene
 Passeth the sterres, ryght so over mesure, 300
 She fairer was than any creature.

And in a launde, upon an hille of floures,
 Was sette this noble goddessse Nature,
 Of braunches were hir halles and hir boures
 Ywrought, aftir hir crafte and hir mesure,
 Ne thei nas foule that cometh of engendrure,
 That there ne were prest, in hir presence,
 To take hir dome, and yeve hir audience.

For this was on seynt Valentynes day,
 Whan every foule cometh there to chese his make, 310
 Of every kynde that menne thynke may,
 And that so huge a noyse ganne they make,
 That erthe, and see, and tree, and every lake,
 So ful was, that unnethe was ther space
 For me to stonde, so ful was al the place

And ryght as Alayne, in the Pleynt of Kynde,
 Devyseth Nature of suche array and face,
 In suche array men myght hir there yfynde

This noble emperesse, ful of *alle* grace,
 Bad every foule to take her oune place, 320
 As they were wont alwey, fro yere to yere,
 Seynt Valentynes day to stonden there

That ys to seye, the fowles of ravyne
 Were hyest sette, and than the foules smale,
 That eten, as that nature wolde enclyne,
 As woime or thyng, of whiche I telle no tale,
 But watir foule sate lowest in the dale,
 And foule, that lyveth by seede, sate on the grene,
 And that so fele, that wonder was to sene

There myghte men the royal egle fynde, 330
 That with his sharpe looke perceth the Sonne,
 And other egles of a lower kynde,
 Of which that clerkes wel devysen konne,
 There was the tiraunt with his fethres donne
 And grey, I mene the goshauke that doth pyne
 To briddes, for his outrageous ravyne

The gentil faucoun, that with his fete distreyneth
 The kynges honde, the *hardy* sperhauke eke,
 The quayles foo, the merlyon that peyneth
 Hymself ful ofte the larke for to seke, 340
 There was the dowve, with hir eyen meke,
 The jalouse swanne, ayens hys deth that syngeth,
 The owle eke, that of dethe the bode bryngeth

The crane, the geaunte, with his trompes soun
 The thefe the choghe, and eke the janglynge pye,
 The scornynge jay, the *eles* foo the herounne,
 The false lapwyng, ful of trecherye,

The stare, that the counseylle kan bewrye,
 The tame ruddok, and the cowarde kyte,
 The cok, that orlogge ys of thropes lyte 350

The sparrow, Venus' sone, and the nyghtyngale
 That clepeth forth the fresshe leues newe,
 The swallow, mordrer of the *bees* smale,
 That maken hony of floures fiessh of hewe,
 The wedded turtel, with hys herte trewe,
 The pecok, with his aungels fethers byghte,
 The fesaunt, scorner of the cok be nyghte

The waker goos, the cukkow ever unkynde,
 The papynjay, ful of delycacye,
 The drake, stroyer of hys owne kynde, 360
 The storke, wreker of avowtrie,
 Tho hoothe cormeraunte, *ful* of glotonye,
 The ravenes and the crowes, with her voys of care,
 The throstel olde, *and* the frosty feldefare

What shulde I seyn? Of foules every kynde,
 That in this worlde han fetheres and stature,
 Men myghte in that place assembled fynde,
 Before that noble goddessse of Nature,
 And eche of hem did hys besy cure
 Benyngly *for* to chese, or for to take, 370
 By hir accorde, hys formel or hys make

But to the poynte — Nature helde on hir honde
 A formel egle, of shappe the gentileste
 That ever she amonge hir werkes fonde,
 The moste benigne, and *eke* the goodlyeste
 In hir was every vertu at his rest,

So ferforthe that Nature hir selfe hadde blysse,
To looke on hir and ofte hir beke to kysse

Nature, the vyker of thalmyghty Lorde,
That hoot, colde, hevy, lyght, moiste, and drye, 380
Hath knyht, by evene noumbre of accorde,
In esy vois, began to speke and seye,
'Foules take *hede* of my sentence I preye,
And for youre ease, in furtheryng of youre nede,
As faste as I may speke I wol me spede

'Ye knowe wel how *on* Seynt Valentynes day,
Be my statute, and thorgh my governaunce,
Ye come for to chese and flee your way
With youre makes, as I prik yow with plesaunce,
But natheles, my ryghtful governaunce, 390
May I not lette, for al this worlde to wynne,
That he that moste ys worthy shal begynne

'The tercel egel, as that ye knowen wele
The foule royal, aboven yow in degree,
The wyse and worthy, secré, trewe as stele,
The whiche I have formed, as ye may se,
In every parte, as hit best lyketh mee,—
Hyt nedeth noght his shappe yow to devyse,—
He shal first chese, and speken in his gyse

'And after hym, by order shul ye chese, 400
Aftir youre kynde, everyche as yow lyketh,
And as youre happe ys, shul ye wyne or lesse,
But which of yow that love moste entriketh,
God sende hym hyr, that sorest for hym syketh '—
And therewythalle the tercel gan she calle,
And seyde, 'My sone, the choys is to the falle

' But natheles, in thys condicioun
 Mote be the choys of everych that ys here,
 That she agree to hys eleccioun,
 Who-so he be, that shulde ben hir fere, 410
 This is oure usage alwey, fro yere to yere,
 And who-so may at this tyme have hys grace,
 In blisful tyme he come into this place '

With hed enclyned and with ful humble chere,
 This real tei cel spake, and taried noght —
 ' Unto my sovereyne lady, and noght my fere,
 I chese and chesse, with wille, and hert, and thought,
 The formel on youre honde, so wel y wrought,
 Whos I am alle, and ever wol hir serve,
 Doo what hir lyst, to doo me lyve or steive 420

' Besechyng hir of mercy and of grace,
 As she that ys my lady sovereyne,
 Or let me dye here present in thys place,
 For certes longe may I not lyve in peyne,
 For in myn herte ys korven every veyne,
 Havyng rewarde oonly to my trouthe,
 My dere heite, have on my woo somme routhe

' And yf I be founde to hir untrew, e,
 Disobeysaunt, or wilful negligent,
 Avauntour, or in processe love a newe, 430
 I pray to yow thys be my jugement,
 That with these foules Y be al to-rent,
 That ylke day that ever she me fynde
 To hir untrew, or in my gylte unkynde

' And syn that noon loveth hir so wel as I,
 Although she never of love me behette

Than oght she be myn thorough hir mercy,
 For other bonde kan I noon on hir knette
 For never for no woo, ne shal I lette
 To serven hir, how feire so that she wende 440
 Sey what yow lyst, my tale ys at an ende '

Ryght as the fresshe rede rose newe
 Ayene the somer sonne coloured ys,
 Ryght so, for shame, al wexen gan the hewe
 Of thys formel, whan she herde al thys,
 Neyther she answerde wel, ne seyde amys,
 So sore abasshed was she, til that Nature
 Seyde 'Doghter drede yow noght, I yow assure '

Anothei tercel egle spake anoon 449
 Of lower kynde, and seyde that shulde not be —
 'I love hu bet than ye do, by seynt Johan '
 Or atte lest I love hyr as wel as ye,
 And lenger have served hir in my degré,
 And yf she shulde have loved for long lovyng,
 To me allone hadde ben the guerdonyng

'I dar cke seye, yf she me fynde fals,
 Unkynde jangler, or rebel in any wyse,
 Or jalouse, do me hongen by the hals,
 And but I bere me in hir servise
 As wel as my wytte kan me suffise, 460
 Flo poynt to poynt hir honour for to save,
 Take she my lyfe and al the good I have '

The thudde tercel egle answerde thoo,
 'Now sus, ye scen the lytel leyser here,
 For every foule cryeth out to ben agoo
 Forth with hys make, or with hys lady dere

And eke *Nature* hir selfe ne wol noght here,
 For tarynge here, noght half that I wolde seye,
 And but I speke, I mote for sorwe deye

‘Of longe seivise avaunte I me nothings, 170
 But as possible ys me to dye to day
 For woo, as he that hath ben langwysshynge
 Thise twenty wynter, and wel happen may,
 A man may serven bette, and more to paye
 In halfe a year, although hyt were no more
 Than somme man dooth that hath served *ful* yore

‘I ne say not thys by me, for I ne kan
 Do no servise that may my lady plese,
 But I dar say I am hir trewest man,
 As to my dome, and faynest wolde hir plese 180
 At shorte wordes, til that deth me sese,
 I wol ben hirse, whethir I wake or wynke,
 And trew in al that heite may bethynke’

Of al my lyfe, syn that day I was borne,
 So gentil plee in love or other thinge,
 Ne herde never no man me befoine,
 Who-*so* that hadde leyser and kunnyng
 For to rehersen hir chere and her spekyng
 And from the morwe gan this speche laste,
 Til downward wente the sonne wonder faste 190

The noyse of foules for to ben delyvered
 So lowde longe, ‘Have doon and let us wende,’
 That wel wende I the woode had al to-shyvered
 ‘Come of!’ they cride, ‘allas, ye wolle us shende’
 Whan shal youre cursed pledyng have an ende?’

How shulde a juge eyther party leve,
For yee or nay, withouten any preve?"

The goos, the duk, and the cukkowe also,
So criden, 'Kek, kek, Kukkow, Quek quek hye,'
That thorgh myn eres the noyse wente tho 500
The goos seyde tho 'Al thys nys worthe a flye'
But I kan shape herof a remedye,
And wol seye my veyrdit, faire and swythe,
For watir foule, whoso be wrothe or blythe'

'And I for worme foule,' seyde the foole cukkowe,
'For I wol, of myn oun auctorité,
For comune spede, take on me the charge nowe,
For to delyveren us, is grete charité'
'Ye may abyde a while yet pardé,'
Quod the turtel, 'yf hyt be youre wille 510
A wyght may speke, hym were as good be stille

'I am a sede foule, oon the unworthieste,
That wot I wel, and lytel of kunnyng,
But better ys that a wightys tonge reste,
Than entremete hym of suche doynge
Of which he neyther rede kan nor synge,
And who-so hyt dothe, ful foule hymself acloyeth,
For office uncommytted ofte anoyeth.'

Nature, which that alway had an ere
To murmur of the lewdenesse behynde, 520
With facound voys seyde, 'Holde your tongesthere,
And I shal soone, I hope, a counseylle fynde,
Yow for to delyveren, and from this noyse unbynde

I jugge of every *flocke* ye shal one calle,
To seyne the veirdit *of* yow foules alle'

Assented were to thys conclusioun
The briddes alle and the foules of ravyne
Han chosen first, by pleyne eleccioun,
The tercelet of the faucoun to dyffyne
Al her sentence, and as hym lyst to termyne, . . .
And to Nature hym gonnen to presente,
And she accepteth hym with glad entente

The tercelet seyde thanne in this manere —
' Ful harde were hyt to preven hyt by resoun,
Who loveth best this gentil formel here,
For everych hath suche replicacioun,
That by skylles may non be broght adoun,
I kannot seen that argumentys awaylle,
Than semeth hit thei moste be bataylle'

' Al redy' quod these egles tercels thoo 510
' Nay, sirs,' quod he, ' yf that I dorst hyt seye,
Ye doon me wrong, my tale ys not ydoo
For sirs, taketh noght a-grefe, I praye,
Hyт may nought be as ye wolde, in thys weye
Oures ys the voys that han the charge in honde,
And to the juges doome ye moten stonde

' And therefore Pes! I seye As to my witte,
Me wolde think, how that the worthieste
Of knyghthode, and lengest had used hitte,
Moste of estaate, of blode the gentyleste, 550
Were syttinge for hir, yf that hir leste,

And of these three she woote hir-selfe, I trowe,
Which that he be, for hyt is lyght to knowe '

The watir foules han her hedes leyde
Togedir, and of shorte avysement,
Whan everych had hys large goler seyde,
They seyden sothely al by on assent,
How that the goos, with hir faucond gent,
That soo desureth to pronounce oure nede, 559
Shal telle oure tale, and preyde to God hir spede

And for these watir foules tho began
The goos to speke, and in hir cakelynge
She seyde, ' Pes now, take kepe every man,
And herkeneth which a resoun I shal forth bringe '
My wytte ys sharpe, I love no tarynge '
I sey Y rede hym, though he were my brothei,
But she wol love hym, lat hym love another '

' Loo ' here a parfyte resoun of a goos '
Quod the sperhauke ' Never mote she thee '
Loo, suche a *thing* hyt ys to have a tonge loos ' 570
Now pardé, foole, yet were hit bet for the
Have holde thy pes, than shewede thy nycté,
Hyt lyth not in hys wytte, nor in hys wille,
But sooth ys seyde, a foole kan nocht be stille '

The laughtre aroose of gentil foules alle,
And ryght anoone the sede foules chosen hadde
The turtel trewe, and ganne hir to hem calle,
And prayden hir to seye the sothe sadde
Of thys matere, and asked what she radde

And she ansuerde, that pleynty hyr entente
She wolde shewe, and sothely what she mente.

‘Nay, God forbede a lover shulde chaunge!’
The turtel seyde, and wepe for shame al rede
‘Though that hys lady evermoie be stiaunge,
Yet let hym serve hir ever, tyl he be dede
Forsoth, I preyse noght the gooses rede,
For though she deyed, I wolde noon other make,
I wol ben hirs til that the deth me take’

‘Wel bourded,’ quod the duk, ‘by my hatte’
That men shulden alwey loven causeles, 590
Who kan a resoun fynde, or wytte in that?
Daunceth he murye that ys murtheles?
Who shulde rechche of that ys rechcheles?
Ye! quek *yet*,’ quod the duk, ‘ful wel and faue’
There ben moo sterres, God woot, than a paire’

‘Now fye cherle!’ quod the gentil tercelet,—
‘Out of the dunghille come that word ful ȝight,
Thou kanst noght see which thing is wel beset,
Thou farest be love as owles doon by ȝight,— 599
The day hem blent, ful wel they see by nyght,
Thy kynde ys of so lowe a wrechednesse,
That what love is thou kanst neyther see ne gesse’

Thoo gan the cukkow put hym forth in pres
For foule that eteth worme, and seyde blyve —
‘So I,’ quod he, ‘may have my make in pes,
I ne reche not how longe that ye strive.
Lat ech of hem be soleyne al her lyve,

This ys my rede, syne they may not acorde,
This shorte lessoun nedeth noght recorde'

'Yee, have the glotoun filde ynogh hys paunche 610
Thanne are we wel' seyde the emerlyoun —
'Thou mordreie of the haysogge on the braunche
That broghte the forth' thou rewful glotoun!
Lyve thou soleyn, wormes corrupcioun!
For no fois ys of lake of thy nature,
Goo, lewde be thou while the woulde may dure'

'Now pes,' quod Nature, 'I commaunde here,
For I have herde al youre opynyoun,
And in effecte yet be we never the nere,
But fynally, this ys my conclusyoun,— 620
That she hir selfe shal have hir eleccioun
Of whom hir lyste, who-so be wrooth or blythe,
Hym that she cheest, he shal han hir as swithe

'For syth hyt may not here discussed be
Who loveth hir best, as seyde the tertelet,
Than wol I doon thys favoun to hir, that she
Shal have ryght hym on whom hir hert is sette,
And he hir, that hys hert hath on her knette.
Thus juge I, Nature, for I may not lye
To noon estaat, I have noon other eye 630

at as for counseylle for to chese a make,
'Būere resoun, than wolde Y
Yf I wex yow the royal tertelet take,
Counseylle tertelet, ful skilfully,
As seyde entilest, and moste worthy,
As for the

Whiche I have wroght so wel to my plesaunce,
That to yow hyt ought to ben a suffisaunce

With diedeful vois the formel hir answerde
‘My ryghtful lady, goddesse of Nature,
Sooth ys, that I am ever under youre yerde, 640
As ys everych other creature,
And moste be youres while my lyf may dure,
And therfore graunte me my fiste boone,
And myn entent yow wol I seye ryght soone’

‘I graunte hyt yow,’ quod she, and ryght anoon
This formel egle spake in thys degré —
‘Almyghty quene, unto this yere be doon
I aske respite for to avysen me,
And after that to have my choys al fre, 649
Thys al and somme that I wolde spek and seye,
Ye gete no more, although ye do me deye

‘I wolle noght serven Venus ne Cupide,
Forsoth as yet, by no maner weye’
‘Now syn hyt may noon other weyes betide,’
Quod Nature, ‘here ys no more to seye
Than wolde I that these foules were awaye,
Ech with hys make, for tarynge lenger here’
And seyde hem thus, as ye shal after here

‘To yow speke I, yee terceletys,’ quod Nature,
‘Beth of good hert, and serveth alle thre, 660
A yere ys not so longe to endure,
And eche of yow peyne hym in hys degré
For to do wel, for, God wote, quyte ys she
- Fro yow thys yere, what after so befallē,
Thus entremesse ys dressed for yow alle’

And whan thys werke al broght was to an ende,
 To every foule Nature gave hys make
 By evene acorde, and on her way they wende
And, Lord ! the blysse and joy that they make !
 For eche of hem gan othei in *his* wynges take, 670
 And with her nekkes eche gan other wynde,
 Thonkyng alwey the noble goddessse of kynde

But first were chosen foules for to synge,—
 As yere by yere was alwey her usaunce,
 To synge a roundel at her departynge,
 To do Nature honour and pleasaunce,
 The note, I trowe, maked was in Fraunce,
 The wordes were suche as ye may here fynde
 The nexte vers, as I now have in mynde
 Qui bien ayme a tarde oublie 680

*‘ Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,
 That haste this wynter wethers overshake,
 Saynt Valentyne, thou arte ful hye on lotte,
 Whiche drivest away the longe nightes blake,
 Thus synge smale foules for thy sake—
 Wel have they cause for to gladen ofte,
 Sens eche of hem recovered hath his make,
 Ful blisful may they singe whan they awake ’*

And with the showtynge whan hir song was do,
 That *the* foules made at her flight away, 690
 I wooke, and other bookes toke me to
 To rede upon, and yet I rede alway
 I hope ywyse to rede so somme day,
 That I shal mete sommethyng for to fare
 The bet, and thus to rede I wol not spae



THE BOKE OF CUPIDE, GOD OF LOVE,
OR THE
CUCKOW AND THE NIGHTINGALE

THE god of love, ah' benedicite,
How myghty and how grete a lorde is
he'

For he can make of lowe hertys hue,
And highe *hertes* low, and like foi to die,
And harde hertis he can make free

And he can make, within a lytel stounde,
Of seke folke ful fiesh, hool and sounde,
And of hoole *folke* he can make seke,
He can bynde, and *wel* unbynden eke,
What he wole have bounden or unbounde

- 10

To telle his myght my wit may not suffice,
For he can make of wise folke ful nyse,
Foi he may do al that he can devyse,
And in lithere folke dystroye vise,
And proude hertys he can make agryse

Shortely al that evere he wol he may,
Ayenst him ther dar no wight seye nay,

For he can glade and greve whom him lyke,
 And whom that he wol, don hym laughe or sike,
 And most his myght he sheweth ever in May 20

For every tiewe gentil herte and fre,
 That with him is, or thinketh *for* to be,
 Ayens May now shal have somme sterynge,
 Other to joy, or elles to some morenynge,
 In no sesoun so grette, as thynketh me

For then they mowe here the buddes singe,
 And see the floures and the leves springe,
 That *brungeth* into hertes remembraunce
 A maner ease, ymedled with grevaunce,
 And lusty thoghtes ful of grete longynge 30

And of that longynge cometh hevynesse,
 And thereof groweth oft *tyme* grete seknesse,
 And *al* for lak of that *that* they desyre
 And thus in May ben heitys set on fire,
 And so they brenne forthe in grete distresse

I speke *al* this of felyng truly,
 For althogh I be olde and unlusty,
 Yet have I felte of that sekenes in May
 Bothe hote and colde, an acces every day,
 How sore, ywis, ther wot no wight but I 40

I am so *shaken* with the feveres white,
 Of al this May yet slept I but a lyte,
 And also hit *ne liketh* noght to me
 That eny herte shulde slepy be,
 In whom that Love his fryr dart wol smyte.

But as I lay this other nyght wakyng,
I thought how lovers had a tokenyng,
And among hem hit was a comune tale,
That hit wer good to here the nyghtyngale,
Rather then the leude cuckow synge 50

And then I thought anoon, as hit was daye,
I wolde goo somme whedir for to assaye
Yf that I myght a nyghtyngale here,
For yet I non had herd of al this yere
And hit was *tho* the thirde nyght of May

And *right* anoon as I the day espiede,
No lenger wolde I in my bed abyde,
But *unto* a wode that was fast by,
I wente forthe allone *ful* prively,
And helde my way down *by* a broke syde 60

Til I come into a launde of white and grene,
So feire oon had I nevere in bene,
The grounde was grene, ypoured with daysé,
The floures and the gras ilike al hie,
Al grene and white, was nothing elles sene

Ther sat I doune amonge the feire floues,
And saw thee briddes crepe out of her boures,
Ther as they had rested hem al *the* nyght,
They were so joyful of the dayes lyght,
That they beganne of Mayes ben ther houres 70

They coude that servise alle bye rote,
Ther was *also* mony a lovely note !
Somme songe loude as they hadde pleyned,
And somme in other maner voys yfeyned,
And somme al oute with a lowde throte

They pruned hem, and made hem ryght gay,
 And daunseden and lepton on the spray,
 And evermore two and two in fere,
 Ryght so as they hadde chosen hem to-yere
 In *Feuerie* upon seynt Valentynes day 80

And the ryver that *then* I sat upon,
 Hit made suche a noyse as hit *ther* ion,
 Acordaunt to the foules ermonyce,
 Me thoght hit was the beste melodye
 That myghte be herd of eny *lyvyng* man

And for delyte, I *ne* wote never how,
 I fel in such a slombie and a swowe,—
 Nat al on slepe, ne fully *al* wakyng,—
 And in that swowe me thoght I herde singe
 That sory bridde the lewede cuckowe, 90

And that was on a tre ight faste bye
 But who was then evel apayed but I?
 ‘Now God,’ quod I, ‘that died upon the croise,
 Yive sorowe on the, and on thy foule voys!
 For lytel joy have I now of thy crie’

And as I with the cuckow gan *to* chide,
 I herde, in the nexte busshes beside,
 A nyghtyngale so lustely singe,
 That with her clere voys she made ryng
 Thro out alle the grene wode wide 100

‘A’ goode nyghtyngale,’ quod I thenne,
 ‘A lytelle hast thou be to longc henne,
 For her hath be the lewede cuckow,
 And songen songes rather than *hast* thou
 I prey to God that evel fire him brenne’

But now I wil yow tel a wonder thyng
As longe as I lay in that swounynge,
Me thoght I wist al that the briddes mente,
And what they seyde, and what was her entente,
And of her speche I hadde good knouynge 110

And then herd I the nyghtyngale seye —
‘ Now, goode cuckow, go sommewhere thy weye
And let us that can synge *dwellen* here,
Fer every wight escheweth the to here,
Thy songes be so elynge, in gode feye ’

‘ What,’ quoth she, ‘ what may the ayle now ?
Hit thinketh me, I syng as wel as thow,
For my songe is bothe tiewe and pleyne,
Al-thogh I cannot creke hit so in veyne,
As thou dost in thy thiote, I wote ner how 120

‘ And every wight may understonde me,
But, Nyghtyngale, so may they not *don* the,
For thou hast mony a *feyned* quaint cry,
I have herd the seye, ‘ ocy, ocy,’
But who myghte wete what that shulde be ? ’

‘ O fole,’ quoth she, ‘ wost thou not what that is ?
When that I sey, ocy, ocy, *i*wisse,
Then mene I that I wolde wonder fayne,
That al tho were shamefully *is*layne,
That menen oght ayenes love amys 130

‘ And also I wolde *alle* tho were dede,
That thenke not her lyve in love to lede,
For who that wol the god of love not serve,

I dar wel sey he is worthy for to sterve ;
 And for that skille, ocy, ocy, I *giede* ’

‘Ey!’ quoth the cuckow, ‘ywis this is a queynt *laue*,
 That eyther shal I love or elles be slawe
 But I forsake *alle* suche companye ,
 For myn entent is neyther *for* to dye,
 Ne while I lyve in loves yoke to drawe 140

‘For lovers be the folke that *ben on* lyve,
 That moste disease han, and most unthrive,
 And most enduren sorowe, wo, and care,
 And at the lest failen of her welfaue
 What nedith hit ayenes *tieweth* to stive ?’

‘What?’ quoth she *tho*, ‘thou art out of thy mynde’
 How maist thou in thy cherles herte fynde
 To speke of Loves servauntes in this wyse ?
 For in this worlde is noon so good servise
 To every wyght that gentyl ys of kynde , 150

‘For therof truly cometh al goodnesse,
 Al honour and al gentilnesse,
 Worshippe, *and* cse, and *alle* heytys lust,
 Perfyt joy, and ful ensured trust,
 Jolité, plesaunce, and *eke* freshenesse,

‘Lowelyhed, and *tiewe* companye,
 Semelyhed, largenesse, and curtesie,
 Drede of shame and for to don amys
 For he that truly Loves servaunt ys,
 Were lother be shamed then to dye 160

‘And that ys sothe al that *ever* I sey,

In that beleve I wil bothe lyve and deye,
 And, Cukkow, so rede I the that thou do *iwis* '
 'Ye then,' quoth she, 'God let me never have blis,
 If evere I *unto* that counseyl obeye !

'Nyghtyngale, thou spekest wonder feyre,
 But, for al that, the sothe is the contreyie,
 For loving in yonge folke is but rage,
 And in olde *folk* hit is a grete dotage,
 Who most hit useth, most he shal apeyre

170

'For therof cometh mony an hevynesse,
 Sorow and care, and mony a *grete* seknesse,
 Dispite, debate, angre, and envye,
 Repreve and shame, *untrust*, and jelosye,
 Pride, and myschete, povert, and wodenesse

'What ! Lovyng is an office of dispaire,
 And oon thing is therin that ys not faire,
 For who that geteth of love a lytil blysse,
 But-*if* he be alway thei by ywysse,
 He may ful sone of age have his *haire*

180

'And therfor, Nyghtyngale, holde the nye,
 For, leve me wel, for al thy loude crie,
 If thou fer or longe be fro thi make,
 Thou shalt be as other that be forsake,
Then shalt thou haten love as wele as I '

'Eye,' quoth she, 'on thi name and on the !
 The god of love *ne* let the nevere ythe !
 For thou art wors a thousand folde then wode,
 For mony is ful worthie and ful good,
 That hadde be noght, ne hadde love ybe

190

‘ For Love his servant evermore amendeth,
 And fro al *evele* tachches him defendeth,
 And maketh him to brenne as eny fire,
 In trouthe and in woischippful desire,
 And, whom him liketh, joy ynogh him sendeth ’

‘ Ye Nyghtyngale,’ he seyde, ‘ holde the *now*
 stille !

For Love hath no resoun but his wille,
 For ofte sihe untrew folke he esith,
 And trewe folke so bittirly displeseth,
That for defaute of grace he let hem spille 200

‘ With suche a lorde wolde I never be,
 For he is blynde *alwey* and may not se,
 And when he lyeth he not ne when he fayleth
 And in this court ful selde trouthe avayleth,
 So dyverse and so wilful *eke* ys he ’

Then toke I of the nyghtyngale kepe,
She kest a sighe out of her herte depe,
 And seyde, ‘ Alas, that I ever was bore !
 I can for tene seye not oon worde more,’
 And ryght with that she brast on for to wepe

‘ Alas !’ quoth she, ‘ my herte wol to-breke 211
 To here thus this false birdde speke
 Of Love, and of his worshipful servyse
 Now, God of Love, thou helpe me in summe wise,
 That I may on this cuckow ben awreke ’

Methoughte then that I stert *up* anone,
 And to the broke I ran and gaite a stone,

And at the cukkow hertely I caste,
 And he for drede *gan* flye away ful faste,
 And glad was I when that he was ȝon 220

And evermore the cukkow, as he fley,
 He seyde, 'Farewel, farewel papyngay'
 As thogh he had ȝcorned, *as* thogh me,
 But ay I hunted him fro tre to tre,
 Tille he was fer al out of syght away

And then come the nyghtyngale to me,
 And seyde, 'Frende, forsoth I thanke the,
 That thou hast lyked me thus to rescowe,
 And oon avowe to love I *wol* allowe,
 That al this May I *wol* thy singer be' 230

'I thanked her, and was ryght wel apayed
 'Yee,' quoth she, 'and be thou not amayed,
 Thogh thou have herde the cukkow er then me.
 For, if I lyve, hit shal amended be
 The nexte May, yf I be not affrayed

'And oon thing I *wol* rede the also,
 Ne leve *thou* not the cukkow, loves fo,
 For al that he hath seyde is strong lesinge'
 'Nay, *nay*,' quoth I, 'ther shal nothing me bringe
 Fro love, and yet he doth me mekil wo 240

'Yee? Use thou,' quoth she, 'this medecyne,
 Every day this May er that thou dyne —
 Goo loke upon the fresshe flour the daysye,
 And, thogh thou be for wo in poynt to dye,
 That shal ful gretly lyssen the of thy pyne.

‘ And loke alwey that thou be good and trewe,
 And I wol singe oon of *my songes newe*
 For love of the, as loude as I may crië,
 And then she began this songe ful hye,
 ‘ I shrewe hem al that be to love untrewe ’ 250

And when she hadd*e* songen hit out to the ende,
 ‘ Now faREWEL,’ quoth she, ‘ for I moste wende,
 And, God of Love, that can ryght wel and may,
 As mekil joy sende yow this day,
 As ever yet he eny lover sende ’

Thus toke the nyghtyngale hi*n* leve of me
 I pray to God he alway with her be,
 And joy of love he sende her evermore,
 And shilde us fro the cuckow and his lore,
 For ther is non so fals a bridde as he 260

Forthe she fley, the gentil nyghtyngale,
 To alle the briddes that werene in the *dale*,
 And gat hem alle into a place yn feie,
 And hem besoughten that they wolden here
 Her dyscese, and thus began her tale

‘ Ye knowe wel, hit is not f*ro* yow hidde,
 How that the cuckow and Y*fast* have chidde,
 Ever s*in*ce *that* hit was dayes light,
 I prey yow alle that ye do me ryght
 Of that foule fals unkynde bridde ’ 270

Then spake oon brid for al, by oon assent —
 ‘ This mat*er* asketh good avysement,
 For we be fewe briddes her in fere,
 And soth*ly* hit ys, the cuckow is not here,
 And ther*ef*ore we wol have a parlement.

‘And therat shal be the egle our lorde,
 And other perys that ben of recoide,
 And the culkow shal be after ysent,
 And ther shal be yeven the jugement,
 Or elles we shul make summe acoide 280

‘And this shal be, withouten any nay,
 The morowe, seynte Valentynes day,
 Under the maple that is feire and grene,
 Before the chambie window of the Quene,
 At Wodestok upon the grene lay’

She thanked hem, and then her leve *she* toke,
 And fleye into an hawthorne by the broke,
 And ther she sate and songe upon the tre,
 ‘Terme of *my* lyve love hath withholde me,’
 So loude that I with that song awoke 290

EXPLICIT

O LEWDE boke, with thy foule rudenesse,
 Sith thou hast neyther beauté ne eloquence,
 Who hath the caused or yeve the hardynesse
 For to appere in my ladyes presence?
 I am ful siker thou knowest hyr benivolence,
 Ful agreable to alle hu obeyinge,
 For of al goode she is the beste lyvyng

Alas! that thou ne haddest worthynesse,
 To shewe to hir somme plesaunt sentence,
 Sithen that she hath, thorgh hir gentillesse, 300
 Acceptede the seivant to hir digne reverence!
 O! me repenteth that I *ne* hadd science,
 And leyser als, to make the more florysshynge,
 For of al goode she ys the beste lyvyng

86 THE CUCKOW AND THE NIGHTINGALE

Beseche hir mekely with alle lowlynesse,
 Though I be fer from hir in *myn* absence,
 To thenke on my trouthe to hir and stidfastnesse,
 And to abregge of my sorwes the violence,
 Whiche caused ys, wherof knoweth your sapience,
 She lyke amonge to notefye me hir lykyng, 310
 For of alle goode she is the beste lyvyng.

LENVOYE

AURORE of gladnesse, and day of lustynerse,
 Lucerne a nyght with hevenly influence ♀
 Enlumyned, rote of beauté and goodenesse,
 Suspires which I effunde in silence!
 Of grace, I beseche, alegge let your writyng
 Now of al goode, syth ye be beste lyvyng

EXPLICIT.



THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF

WHEN that Phebus his chaire of gold so
hie
Hadde whirled up the sterrie sky alofte,
And in the Boole was entred certainly

When shoures sweet of raine discended softe,
Causing the ground, fele times and ofte,
Up for to give many an wholesome aire,
And every plaine was *eke* yclothed faire

With newe green, and maketh small floures
To springen here and there in field and mede,
So very good and wholesome be the shoures, 10
That it renueth that was old and dede
In winter time, and out of every sede
Springeth the hearbe, so that every wight
Of this season wexeth *ful* glad and light

And I, so glad of the season *thus* swete,
Was happed thus upon a certaine night —
As I lay in my bed, sleepe ful unmete
Was unto me, but why that I ne mighte
Rest, I ne wiste, for there nas earthly wight,
As I suppose, hadde more heartes ease , 20
Than I, for I nadde sicknesse nor disease

Wherefore I mervail greatly of my selfe,
 That I withouten sleepe so longe lay,
 And up I rose three houres after twelfe,
 Aboute the springing of the day,
 And on I putte my geare and mine array,
 And to a pleasaunt grove I gan to passe,
 Long or the brighte Sonne up-risen was,

In which were okes greate, streight as a line,
 Under the which the grasse, so fresh of hewe, 30
 Was newly sprong, and an eight foot or nine
 Every tree well fro his fellow grew,
 With branches brode, lade with leves newe,
 That sprongen out ayen the sunne shene
 Some very red, and some a glad light grene,

Which, as me thoughte, was right a plesant sight,
 And eke the briddes songes for to here
 Would have rejoyced any earthly wight,
 And I that couthe not yet, in no manere,
 Heare the nightingale of all the yere, 40
 Ful busily heikened with hart and care,
 If I her voice percieve coud any where

And, at the last, a path of little breede
 I found, that greatly hadde not used be,
 For it forgirowen was with grasse and weede,
 That well unneth a wight ne might it se
 Thoght I, ' This path some whider goth, pardé !'
 And so I followede, till it me broughte
 To right a pleasaunt herber, well ywrought,

That benched was, and eke with turfes new' 50
 Freshly turved, whereof the grene gras,

So small, so thicke, so short, so fresh of hewe,
 That most ylike greene wool, I wot, it was
 The hegge also that yede in *this* compas,
 And closed in all the greene herbere,
 With sicamour was set and eglatere,

Wrethen in fere so well and cunningly,
 That every branch and leafe grew by mesure,
 Plaine as a bord, of oon height by and by
 I *ne* segh never thing, I you ensure, 60
 So well y-done, for he that tooke the cure
 It *for* to make, Y trow did all his peine
 To make it passe alle tho that men have seine

And shapen was this herber, roofe and all,
 As is a prety parlour, and also
 The hegge as thicke as is a castle wall,
 That who that list withoute to stond or go,
 Though he would all day puen to and fro,
 He shoulde not see if there were any wighte
 Within or no, but one within wel mighte 70

Perceiue alle tho that yeden there withoute
 Into the field, that was on every side
 Covered with corne and giasse, that out of doubt,
 Though one woulde seeke all the worlde wide,
 So rich a fiede *ne* coude not be espide
 On *any* coast, as of the quantitie,
 For of alle good thing there was plentie

And I that all this pleasaunt sight *ay* sie,
 Thought sodainly I felte so sweet an aire
 Com of the eglentere, that certainly 80

There is no heart, I deme in such dispaire,
 Ne with *no* thoughtes froward and contraire
 So overlaid, but it shoulde soone have bote,
 If it had ones felt this savour sote

And as I stood and cast aside mine eie,
 I was of ware the fairest medler tree,
 That ever yet in all my life I sie,
 As full of blossomes as it mighte be,
 Therein a goldfinch leaping pretile
 Fro bough to bough, and, as him list, *gan eete* 90
 Of buddes here and there and floures sweete

And to the herber side *ther* was joyninge
 This faire tree, of which I have you told,
 And at the last the brid began to singe,
 When he had caten what he eate wolde,
 So passing sweetly, that by manifolde
 It was more pleasaunt than I coude devise.
 And when his song was ended in this wise,

The nightingale with so mery a note
 Answered him, that all the woode rong 100
 So sodainly, that, as it were a sote,
 I stood astonied, so was I with the song
 Thorow ravished, that till late and longe,
 Ne wist I in what place I was, ne where,
 And ay, me thoughte, she song even by mine ere.

Wherefore about I waited busily,
 On every side, if *that* I her mighte see,
 And, at the last, I gan full well aspie
 Where she sat in a fresh grene laurer tree,
 On the further side, even right by me, 110

That gave so passing a delicious smell,
According to the eglentere full well

Whereof I hadde so inly great pleasure,
That, as me thought, I surely ravished was
Into Paradice, where *as* my desire
Was for to be, and no feither to passe
As for that day, and on the sote grasse
I sat me downe, for, as for mine entent,
The birddes song was more convenient,

And more pleasaunt to me by many fold, 120
Than meat or drinke, or any other thing
Thereto the herber was so fresh and cold,
The wholesome savours eke so comforting,
That, as I demede, sith the beginning
Of *thulke* world was never seene or than
So pleasaunt a ground of none earthly man

And as I sat, the birddes harkening thus,
Me thoughte that I hearde voices sodainly,
The most sweetest and most delicious
That ever any wight, I trow truly, 130
Heard in *here* life, for *sothe* the armony
And sweet accord was in so good musike,
That the voices to angels most was like

And at the last, out of a grove *faste* by,
That was right goodly and pleasant to sight,
I sie where there came, singing lustily,
A world of ladies, but, to tell aright
Here grcte beautie, it lieth not in my might,
Ne *here* array, neverthelesse I shalle
Telle you a part, though I speake not of alle 140

The surcotes white, of velvet wele sitting,
 They were in clad, and the semes echone,
 As it were a maner garnishing,
 Was set with emeraudes, one and one.
 But by and by *ful* many a riche stone
 Was set on the purfiles, out of doute,
 Of colors, sleves, and traines round aboute.

As greate pearles, round and oriente,
 Diamondes fine, and rubies rede
 And many another stone, of which I wente 150
 The names now; and everich on her heade
 A riche fret of gold, which, withoute drede,
 Was full of stately riche stones set;
 And every lady had a chapelet

Upon her head of *floures* fresh and greene,
 So wele *ywrought* and so mervellously,
 That *soth* it was a noble sight to seene;
 Some of laurer, and some full pleasantly
 Hadde chapelets of woodbind, and sadly
 Some of *agnus castus* were also 160
 Chapelets freshe; but there were many tho

That song and daunced, eke ful soberly,
 And all they yede in manner of compage;
 But one there yede in mid the company,
 Soole by her selfe; but alke followede the pace
 Which that she kepte, whose heavenly *faire* face
 So pleasaunt was, and her wele shape person,
 That of beautie she past hem everichone.

And more richly beseene, by manifold,

She was also in every maner thing 170
 Upon her head, full pleasaunt to beholde,
 A crowne of gold riche for any king
 A braunch of *agnus castus* eke bearing
 In her hand, and to my sight truly,
 She lady was of al the company

And she began a roundell lustely,
 That '*Suse le foyle, devers moy,*' men calle,
 '*Seen et mon joly cuer est endormy,*
 And than the company answered alle,
 With voices sweet entuned, and so smalle 180
 That it me thoughte the sweetest melody
 That ever I heard in my life soothly

And thus they came, dauncing and singing
 Into the middest of the mede echone,
 Before the herber where I was sitting,
 And, God wot, me thought I was wel bigone,
 For then I might avise hem one by one,
 Who fairest was, who coude best dance or singe,
 Or who most womanly was in alle thinge

They hadde not daunced but a little thowe, 190
 When that I hearde not ferre off sodainely,
 So great a noise of thundering trumpes blowe,
 As though it should have departed the skie,
 And, after that, within a while I sie,
 From the same grove where the ladies come oute,
 Of men of armes coming such a route,

As alle the men on earth hadde ben assembled
 In that place, wele horsed for the nones,
 Stering so faste, that al the earth trembled
 But for to speake of riches and of stones, 200

And men and horse, I trow the large wones
 Of Prestur John, ne all his tresorie,
 Mighte not unneth have boght the tenth partie

Of *here* array who so list heare more,
 I shall rehearse so as I can a lite
 Out of the grove, that I of spake before,
 I sie come first, all in *here* clokes white,
 A company, that ware, for *here* delite,
 Chapelets fiesh of okes serialle,
 Newly yspronge, and trumpets they were alle 210

On every trumpe hanging a broad banere
 Of fine tartanium ful richely bete ,
 Every trumpet his lordes armes bere ,
 About *here* neckes, with greate pearles sete,
 Colleres brode , for cost they woulde not lete,
 As it woulde seeme, for *here* scochones echone
 Were set aboute with many a preeceous stone

Here horse harneis was all white also
 And after *hem* next, in one company,
 Came kinges of armes, and no mo, 220
 In clokes of white cloth of gold richly ,
 Chapelets of greene on *here* heades on hie ,
 The crownes that they on *here* scochones bere,
 Were set with pearle, ruby, and saphere,

And eke great diamondes many one
 But all *here* horse harneis and other geare
 Was in a sute accordinge, everychone,
 As ye have heard the foresaid trumpets were,
 And, by seeming, they were nothing to lere,

And *here* guiding they dide so manerly. 230
And, after hem, came a great company

Of heraudes and pursevauntes eke,
Arriayed in clothes of whit velvette,
And, hardtly, they were no thing to seke,
How they on hem shoulde the harnais sette ,
And every man had on a chapelet ,
Scochones and eke horse harnais, indede,
They had in sute of hem that before hem yede

Next after hem camen, in armour bright
All save *here* heades, seemely knightes nine, 240
And every claspe and naile, as to my sight,
Of *here* harnais were of red golde fine ,
With cloth of gold, and furred with ermine
Were the trappores of *here* stedes stronge,
Wide and large, that to the ground dide honge

And every bosse of bridle and paitrell
That hadde they, was worth, as I woulde wene,
A thousand pound , and on *here* heades, well
Dressed, were crownes of laurer grene,
The best ymade that ever I hadde sene, 250
And every knight had after him riding
Three henshemen on him *ay* awaiting

Of which every *first*, on a short tronchoun,
His lordes helme baie, so richly dight,
That the worst was worth the ransom
Of *any* king , the second a shield bright
Bare at his *backe* , the thridde bare upright

A mightie spere, full sharpe yground and kene,
And every child *eke* ware of leaves giene

A fresh chapclet upon his haire brighte , 260
And clokes white of fine velvet they were ,
Here steedes trapped and *arraied* righte,
Withoute difference, as *here* lordes were ,
And after hem, on many a fresh corsere,
There came of armede knightes such a route,
That they bespradde the large field aboute

And all they ware, after *here* degrees,
Chapelets newe made of laurer grene ,
Some of *the* oke, and some of other trees,
Some in *here* hondes bare boughes shene, 270
Some of laurer, and some of okes kene,
Some of hauthorne, and some of *the* woodbind,
And many mo which I hadde not in mind

And so they came, *here* horses freshly stering
With bloodie sownes of hei trompes loude ,
There sie I many an uncouth disguising
In the array of these knightes proude ,
And at the last, as evenly as they coude,
They took *here* places in middes of the mede,
And every knight turned his horse hede 280

To his fellow, and lightly laud a spere
In the *arest*, and so justes began
On every part abouten, here and there ,
Some brake his spere, some drew down hors and
 manne ,
Aboute the field astray the steedes ranne ,

And, to behold *here* rule and governaunce,
I you ensure, it was a great pleasaunce

And so the justes last an houre and more,
But tho that crowned were in laurer grene
Wanne the prise, *here* dintes were so soie, 290
That there was none ayenst hem mighte sustene
And the justing all was yleft off clene,
And fro *here* horse the ninth alight anone,
And so did all the remnant everichone

And forth they yede togider, twain and twain,
That to behold it was a worthy sight,
Toward the ladies on the greene plaine,
That song and daunced, as I saide now righte
The ladies *tho*, soone as they goodly mighte,
They braken of bothe the song and dance, 300
And yede to meet hem with ful glad semblance.

And every lady tooke, full womanly,
By the *right* hond a knight, and forth they yede
Unto a faire laurer that stood fast by,
With leves lade, the boughes of great biede,
And to my dome there never was, indede,
Man that hadde seene halfe so faire a tree,
For underneath there might it well have be

An hundred persons, at *here* owne plesance,
Shadowed fro the heat of Phebus bright, 310
So that they shoulde*n* have felt no grieveaunce
Of raine ne haile that hem *ne* hurte mighte
The savour eke rejoyce would any wighte
That hadde be sicke or melancolius,
It was so very good and vertuous

And with great reverence encline they lowe
 To *thilke* tree so soot, and faire of hewe ,
 And after that, within a litle throwe,
 They beganne to singe and daunce of newe
 Some song of love, some plaining of untrewe, 32
 Envirouninge the tree that stood upright ,
 And ever yede a lady and a knight

And at the last mine eye I caste aside,
 And was ware of a lustie company
 That came roming out of the field wide,
 Hond in hond a knight and a lady ,
 The ladies all in surcotes, that richely
 Purfiled were with many a rich stone,
 And every knight of grene ware mantles on,

Embrouded well so as the surcotes were 33c
 And everich had a chapelet on her hede,
 Which dide right well upon the shining here,
I-made of goodly floures white and rede ,
 The knightes eke, that they in hond *gan* lode,
 In sute of hem ware chapelets everychone,
 And before hem wente minstrels many one

As harpes, pipes, lutes, and sautry,
 All in greene , and on *here* heades bare,
 Of divers floures, made full craftely,
 All in a sute, goodly chapelets they ware, 34c
 And, so dauncing, into the mede they fare.
 In mid the which they found a tuft that was
 Al oversprad with floures in compas.

Whereto they enclined everychone
 With great reverence, and that full humbly ;

And, at the laste, there began anone
 A lady for to singe right womanly
 A bargaret in praising the daisie,
 For, as me thought, among her notes swete,
 She said '*Si douse est la Mangarete*' 359

Than they all answered her in fere,
 So passingly well, and so pleasauntly,
 That *soth* it was a blisfull noise to here
 But, I not *how*, it happede suddainly
 As aboute noone, the sonne so fervently
 Waxe hote, that the pretie tendre floures
 Hadde lost the beautie of her fleshe colours,

Forshronke with heat, the ladies eke to-brent,
 That they ne wiste where hem to bestowe,
 The knightes swelte, for lack of shade nie shent, 360
 And after that, within a litle throwe,
 The wind began so sturdily to blowe,
 That down goeth alle the floures everichone,
 So that in all the mede there laft not one,

Save such as succoured were among the leves
 Fro every storme that mighte hem assaile,
 Growing under hedges and thicke greves,
 And after that there came a storme of haile
 And raine in fere, so that, withouten faile,
 The ladies ne the knightes nade o threed 370
 Drie upon hem, so dropping was her weed

And whan the storm was cleane passed away,
 Tho *clad* in white that stode under the tree,
 They felte nothing of the great affray,
 That they in greene without had in ybe,

To *hem* they yede for routhe and pité,
Hem to comfort after *here* greate disease,
So faine they were the helplesse for to ease

Than was I ware how one of *hem* in grene
Had on a crowne, *ful* rich and wel sitting, 380
Wherefore I demed wel she was a quene,
And tho in greene on her were awaiting,
The ladies then in white that were comming
Towardes *hem*, and the knightes in fere,
Beganne *hem* to comfort, and make *hem* chere

The queen in white, that was of great beauty,
Tooke by the hond the queen that was in grene,
And said, 'Suster, I have right great pitie
Of your annoy, and of the troublous tene,
Wherein ye and your company have bene 390
So long, alas ! and if that it you please
To go with me, I shall do you the ease,

'In all the pleasure that I can or may,'
Whereof the tother, humbly as she mighte,
Thanked her, for in right ill array
She was with storm and heat, I you behighte,
And every lady, then anone right,
That were in white, one of *hem* took in grene
By the hond, which when the knightes hadde sene,

In like wise ech of *hem* tooke *hur* a knight 400
I-clad in greene, and forth with *hem* they fare,
Un-to an hegge, where they anon *gan* right
To make *here* justes, woulde they not spare
Boughes to hewe down, and eke trees square,

Wherwith they made hem stately fires greate,
To dry *here* clothes that were wringing weate.

And after that, of hearbes that there grewe,
They made, for blisters of the sunne brenning,
Very good and wholesome ointmentes newe,
Where that they yede the sicke fast anointing, 410
And after that they yede aboute gadering
Pleasaunt salades, which they made hem eate,
For to refresh *here* greate unkindly heate

The lady of the Leafe then *gan* to praye
Her of the Floure (for so to my seeming
They shoulde be, as by *here* arraye)
To soupe with her, and eek, for any thing,
That she shoulde with her all her people bringe,
And she ayen, in right goodly manere,
Thanketh her of her most friendly cheare, 420

Saying plainely, that she would obaye
With all her hart all her commaundement,
And then anon, withoute lenger delaye,
The lady of the Leafe hath one ysent
For a palfray, *as* after her intent,
Arrayed well and faire in harneys of golde,
For nothing lacked, that to him long sholde.

And after that, to all her company
She made to purvey horse and every thing
That they needed, and then ful lustily, 430
Even by the herber where I was sitting,
They passed alle, so pleasantly singing,

That it would have comforted any wight
But then I sie a passing wonder sight,

For then the nightingale, that all the day
Had in the laurier sete, and did her might
The whole service to singe longing to May,
All sodainly *began* to take her flight,
And to the lady of the Leafe, forthright,
She flew, and set her on her hond softly, 440
Which was a thing I marveled of greatly.

The goldfinch eke, that fro the medler tree
Was fled for heat into the bushes colde,
Unto the lady of the Flower gan flee,
And on her hond he set him as he wolde,
And pleasauntly his winges gan to folde,
And for to singe they pained hem both, as sore
As they hadde do of all the day before.

And so these ladies rode forth a great pace,
And all the rout of knightes eke in fere, 450
And I that hadde seene all this wonder case,
Thought I would assay in some manere,
To knowe fully the trouth of this matere,
And what they were that rode so pleasantly.
And when they were the herber passed by,

I dreste me forth, and happede to mete anone
Right a faire lady, I you ensure,
And she come riding by herselfe alone,
All in white, with semblance ful demure
I *salued* her, and bad her good aventure 460
Might her befall, as I coude most humbly,
And she answerede, 'My doughter, gramercy!'

‘Madame,’ quod I, ‘if that I durst enquire
 Of you, I woulde faine, of that company,
 Wite what they be that paste by this arbere”
 And she ayen answered right friendly —
 ‘My faire doughter, all tho that passed here by
 In white clothing, be servaunts everichone
 Unto the Leafe, and I myselfe am one

‘See ye not her that crowned is,’ quod she, 470
 ‘All in white”—‘Madame,’ quod I, ‘yrs’
 That is Diané, goddesse of chastité,
 And for because that she a maiden is,
 In her *own* hond the braunch she beareth *wis*,
 That *agnus castus* men calle properly,
 And alle the ladies in her company,

‘Which as ye se of that hearb chapelets weare,
 Be such as han kept alway hir maidenheed
 And alle they that of laurer chaplets beare,
 Be such as hardy were, and manly indeed,— 480
 Victorious name which never may be dede’
 And alle they were so worthy of *here* honde,
 That in her time none might hem withstonde

‘And tho that weare chaplets on *here* hede
 Of fresh woodbind, be such as never were
 To love untrue in word, *in* thought, ne dede,
 But aye stedfast, ne for pleasaunce, ne fere,
 Thogh that they shuld *here* hertes al to-tere,
 Woulde *ne* fitte, but ever were stedfaste,
 Til that *here* lives there asunder *in aste*’ 490

‘Now faire madame,’ quod I, ‘yet would I pray
 Your ladiship, if that it mighte be,

That I mighte knowe, by some maner way,
(Sith that it hath *z*-liked your beauté,
The trowth of these ladies for to telle me),
What that these knightes be in rich armour,
And what tho be in grene and weare the flour ?

‘ And why that some dide reverence to the tre,
And some unto the plot of floures faire ?’
‘ With right good will, my fair doghter,’ quod she,
‘ Sith your desire is good and debonaire , 501
Tho nine crowned be very exemplaire
Of all honour longing to chivalry ,
And those certaine be called the Nine Worthy,

‘ Which ye may see *now* riding all before,
That in her time dide many a noble dede,
And for *here* worthinesse full oft have bore
The crowne of laurer leaves on *here* hede,
As ye may in your olde bookes rede ,
And how that he that was a conquerour, 510
Hadde by laurer alway his most honour.

‘ And tho that beare bowes in *here* honde
Of the precious laurer so notable,
Be such as were, I woll ye understonde,
Noble knightes of the rounde table,
And eke the Douseperis honourable,
Which they bearen in signe of victory ,
It is wittnesse of *here* deedes mightily.

‘ Eke there be knightes old of the garter,
That in her time dide right worthily , 520
And the honour they dide to the laurer,

Is for by *it* they have *here* laud wholly,
Here triumph eke, and marshall glory,
 Which unto *hem* is more parfit richesse,
 Than any wight imagine can or gesse

‘ For one leafe given of that noble tree
 To any wight that hath done worthily,
 And it be done so as it oughte to be,
 Is more honour than anything earthly,
 Witnessse of Rome that founder was truly 530
 Of all knighthood and deedes marvelous,
 Record I take of Titus Livijs.

‘ And as for her that crowned is in greene,
 It is Flora, of these floures goddessse,
 And all that here on her awaiting beene,
 It are such *folk* that loved idlenesse,
 And not delite *hadde* of no businesse,
 But for to hunt and hauke, and pley in medes,
 And many other such idle dedes

‘ And for the greate delite and pleasaunce 540
 They have to the floure, and so reverently
 They unto it do such *grete* obeisaunce
 As ye may se ’—‘ Now faire Madame,’ quod I,
 ‘ If I durst aske what is the cause and why,
 That knightes have the signe of honour,
Wel rather by the leafe than by the flour ’

‘ Soothly, doughter,’ quod she, ‘ this is the trouth —
 For knightes ever shoulde be persevering,
 To seeke honour without feintise or slouth,
 Fro wele to better in all manner thing, 550

In signe of which, with leaves aye lasting
 They be rewarded after *here* degre,
 Whose lusty green may not appaired be,

‘ But aie keping *here* beautie fresh and greene,
 For there nis storme that *ne* may hem deface,
Ne haile nor snow, *ne* winde nor frostes kene,
 Wherefore they have this propertie and grace
 And for the floure, within a litle space
 Woll be *2*-lost, so simple of nature
 They be, that they no greivance may endure, 566

‘ And every storme will blow *hem* soone awaye,
 Ne laste they not but for *oon* season
 That is the cause, the very trouth to saye,
 That they maye not, by no way of reason,
 Be put to no such occupation ’
 ‘ Madame,’ quod I, ‘ with all mine whole servise
 I thanke you now, in my most humble wise ,

‘ For now I am acertained throughly,
 Of every thing I desired to knowe ’
 ‘ I am right glad that I have said, sothly, 570
 Ought to your pleasure, if ye wille me trowe,’
 Quod she ayen, ‘ but to whom do ye owe
 Your service ? and which wolle ye honoure,
 Tel me I pray, this yere, the Leafe or the Floure?’

‘ Madame,’ quod I, ‘ though I *be* least worthy,
 Unto the Leafe I owe mine observaunce ’
 ‘ That is,’ quod she, ‘ right well done certainly,
 And pray I God to honour you avaunce,
 And kepe you fro the wicked remembraunce

Of Malebouch, and all his crueltie, 580
And all that good and well conditioned be.

‘ For here may I no lenger now abide,
I muste followe the greate company,
That ye maye see yonder before you ride ’
And *tho* forth, as I couthe, most humbly,
I tooke my leve of her, as she gan hie
After *hem* as fast as ever she mighte,
And I drow homeward, for it was nigh nighte,

And put all that I *hadde* seene in writing,
Under support of *hem* that lust it to rede 590
O little booke, thou art so unconning,
How darst thou put thy-self in prees, for drede ?
It is wonder that thou wexest not rede !
Sith that thou wost full lite who shall beholde
Thy rude language, ful boistously unfold

EXPLICIT.



TROYLUS AND CRYSEYDE.

INCIPIT LIBER PRIMUS

I.

THE double sorowe of Troylus to tellen,
That was the kyng Priamus sone of
Troye,
In lovyng how hise aventures fellen
From wo to wele, and after out of joye,
My purpos is, er that I parte fro the
Thesiphone, thou help me for tendite
This woful vers, that wepen as I write

II

To the clepe I, thow goddesse of torment !
Thow cruel *wyghte*, sorowynge ever in peyne,
Help me, that am the sorowful instrument 10
That helpeth lovers, as I kan, to pleyne
For wel it sit, the sothe *al* for to seyne,
A woful wyght to han a drery feere,
And to a sorwful tale a sory chere

III

For I that God of Loves servaunt serve,
Ne dar to love for myn unliklynesse,

Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfore sterve,
 So fer I am from his helpe in derkenesse,
 But natheles, if this may done gladnesse
 Unto any lovere, and his cause awaylle, 20
 Have he my thonk, and myn be this travaille

IV

But ye lovers that bathen in gladdenesse,
 If any drope of pité in yow be,
 Remembreth yow on passed hevynesse,
 That ye han felt and on the adversité
 Of other folk and thenketh how that ye
 Han felt that Love dorste yow displese,
 Or ye han wonne hym with to grete an ese

V

And preyeth for hem that ben in the cas
 Of Troilus, as *ye* may after heere, 30
 That Love hem brynge in Hevene to solas
 And eke for me preyeth to God so deere,
 That I have myght to shew, in som manere,
 Swich payne and wo, as Loves folk endure,
 In Troilus unsely aventure

VI

And byddeth ek for hem that ben despeyred
 In love, that nevere nyl recovered be
 And ek for hem that falsly ben apeyred
 Thorwgh wikked tonges, be it he or sche
 Thus byddeth God, for his benignité, 40
 To graunte hem sone out of this world to passe,
 That ben despeyred out *of* loves grace

VII

And byddeth ek for hem that ben at ese,
 That God hem graunte ay goode perseveraunce,
 And sende hem myght hire loves so to plesse,
 That it to love be worschip and plesaunce
 For so hope I best my soule to avaunce,
 To preye for hem that Loves servauntes be,
 And write hire wo, and lyve in cherité

VIII

And for to have of hem compassyoun, 50
 As though I were hire owne brother deere
 Now herkeneth with a goode entencioun,
 For now wol I gone streght to my matere,
 In whiche ye may the double sorwes here
 Of Troilus, in lovyng of Criseyde,
 And how that she forsoke him or sche deyede

IX

It is wele wist, how that the Grekes stronge
 In armes with a thousand shippes wente
 To Troye wardes, and the cité longe
 Assegheden, nygh ten yer er they stente, 80
 And in dyverise wise and oon entente,
 The ravys/lynge to wreken of Eleyne,
 By Paris don, they wroughten al hire payne

X

Now fel it so, that in the town ther was
 Dwellynge a lord of grete autorité,
 A grete devyn that cleped was Calkas,
 That in science so expert was, that he

Knew wele that Troye sholde destroyed be,
By answer of his god, that hyghte thus,
Daun Phebus, or Apollo Delphicus 70

XI

So when this Calkas knew by calkulynge,
And ek by answer of this Apollo,
That Grekes sholden swiche a peple brynge,
Thorwgh whiche that Troye moste ben fordo,
He cast onon out of the town to go
For wel wist he by sort that Troye sholde
Destroyed ben, ye, wold who-so or nolde

XII

For which for to departen softlye,
Took purpos ful this for knowynge wyse,
And to the Grekes oost ful pryvely 80
He stal anon, and thei in courtays wyse
Hym deden bothen worschipp, and servyse,
In truste that he hath knowynge hem to rede
In every peril, which that is to drede

XIII

The noyse up rose when it was first aspied,
Thorwgh al the town, and generally was spoken,
That Calkas traitor fals fled was and allied
With hem of Grece, and casten to ben wroken
On him that falsly hadde his faith so broken,
And sayden that he and alle his kyn atoones 90
Ben worthy for to brennen alle fel and bones

XIV

Now hadde Calkas left, in this mischaunce,
Alle unwiste of this fals and wikked dede,